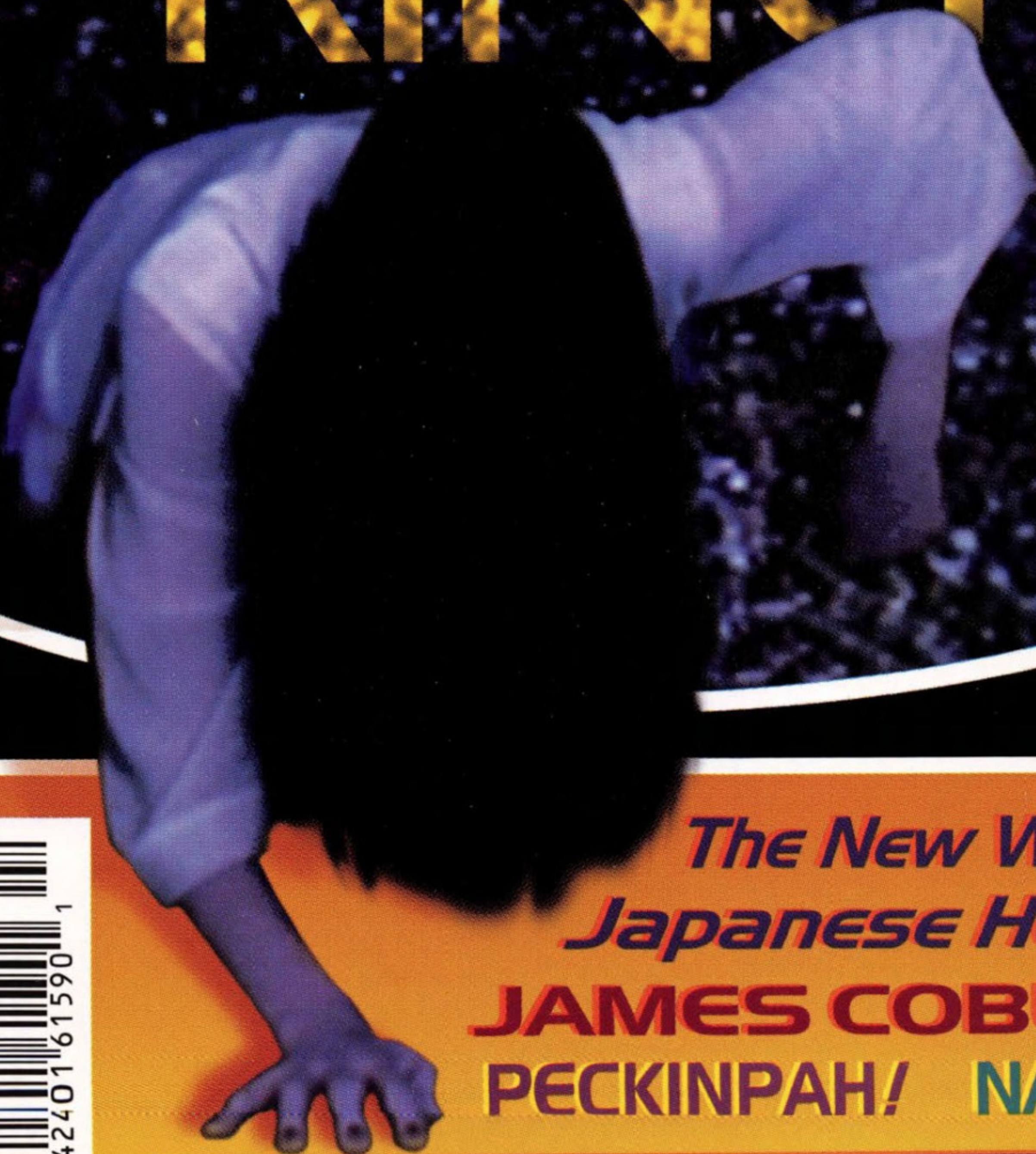


Video Watchdog®

the Perfectionist's
Guide to
Fantastic Video

No. 92
\$6.50

RING



*The New Wave of
Japanese Horror!*

JAMES COBURN!
PECKINPAH! NASCHY!

TAPES • DVDs • SOUNDTRACKS • BOOKS

\$6.50 U.S. / \$9.50 CANADA





Video Watchdog®

the Perfectionist's
Guide to
Fantastic Video

No. 92 / FEB 2003

"There are times when we must sink to the bottom of our misery to understand truth, just as we must descend to the bottom of a well to see the stars in broad daylight."

—Václav Havel, *LIVING IN TRUTH*

Contents

FEATURES

The RING Cycle A Gaze into the Wellspring of New Japanese Horror 26

Everyone's either talking about it or wondering about it—so where *did* THE RING come from? *Richard Harland Smith* answers that burning question with an insightful overview of the RING phenomenon, including reviews of all five RING films currently available on import DVD and VCD... plus his thoughts on the recent American remake!

DVD Spotlight: Flint Lives! 40

Tim Lucas pays tribute to the late James Coburn with a critical essay/review of *OUR MAN FLINT* and *IN LIKE FLINT*, now available on DVD from 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment!

Front: Sadako emerges into the world to enact her vengeance in Hideo Nakata's *RING* [*Ringu*, 1998], as illustrated by Charlie Largent.

Inside: Naomi Watts enacts a primal scene doubtless familiar to all our readers, as she discovers her son (David Dorfman) viewing some unapproved programming in Gore Verbinski's remake, *THE RING* (2002), forthcoming on home video from DreamWorks.

Back: Naomi Watts discovers that all is not well in the well in *THE RING* (2002).

DEPARTMENTS

Kennel 2

The Watchdog Barks 3

Watchdog News 4

Sources 11

The Letterbox 76

REVIEWS

Audio Watchdog 74

By Douglas E. Winter

Biblio Watchdog 72

THE MUMMY IN FACT, FICTION & FILM
reviewed by Anthony Ambrogio

DVDs 46

THE BLACK CAT, THE FAT BLACK
PUSSYCAT, CARNIVAL OF BLOOD,
DRACULA THE DIRTY OLD MAN, FRIGHT,
HIGHLANDER, WEREWOLF SHADOW,
CURSE OF THE DEVIL, THE FURY OF THE
WOLFMAN and so much more!

Joe Dante's Fleapit Flashbacks 20

By Joe Dante

Video Tapevine 12

LEGEND OF HORROR, THE MAGIC
SERPENT, MISTER PEEK-A-BOO, THE
PEEPING, ROOM OF CHAINS, WARNING
FROM SPACE, and more!

KENNEL

ANTHONY AMBROGIO is a frequent contributor to VIDEO WATCHDOG and MIDNIGHT MARQUEE.

STEPHEN R. BISSETTE is working with author Joe Citro to produce a documentary version of their book THE VERMONT GHOST GUIDE (Eye First Media).

JOHN CHARLES wrote every single review in this issue's "Video Tapevine." Visit Hong Kong Digital at www.dighkmovies.com.

SHANE M. DALLMANN has realized his dream of becoming a TV horror host with REMO D.'s MANOR OF MAYHEM. See www.horror-wood.com/remo.htm for details.

JOE DANTE says of James Coburn: "He was one of those actors who, when you finally get to meet them, exceeds every expectation of who they might actually be. Jim Coburn was effortlessly cool!"

CHARLIE LARGENT recently wowed us by selling an original story idea to the producers of UPN's THE TWILIGHT ZONE!

TIM LUCAS can't help wondering if Kôji Suzuki read a copy of TABOO #1 (1988) before writing his 1991 novel RINGU.

RICHARD HARLAND SMITH has written a new play, THE VIY, based on Gogol's classic tale. It will be staged in NYC, under his direction, next Spring.

NATHANIEL THOMPSON is the author of DVD DELIRIUM, a softcover collection of DVD reviews published in the UK by FAB Press.

REBECCA & SAM UMLAND contributed a chapter to FEAR WITHOUT FRONTIERS, forthcoming later this year from FAB Press.

DOUGLAS E. WINTER caught a boo-boo in VW #90's Audio Watchdog column, but we don't have enough room here to tell you what it was.

VW THANKS:

Anchor Bay Entertainment (Jay Douglas, Perry Martin, Maral Kaloustian/Sue Procko PR), Juanita Bowman, Criterion (r. o'donnell, Mark Walkow), Christopher Sven Dietrich, DreamWorks, Image Entertainment (Spencer Savage), McFarland and Company, MGM Home Entertainment, Mondo Macabro (Pete Tombs), Paramount Home Entertainment, Poker Industries (Michael Basden), August Ragone, Retromedia Entertainment (Steve Latshaw), Seduction Cinema (Michael Raso), Something Weird Video (Mike Vraney, Lisa Petrucci), Tai Seng Video Marketing (Frank Djeng), Tartan Video, 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, Xploited Cinema (Tom Simonelli), our contributors (the postponed, as well as those present and accounted-for), subscribers, distributors, correspondents and, especially, Mr. James Coburn—it was "a groove and a gas."

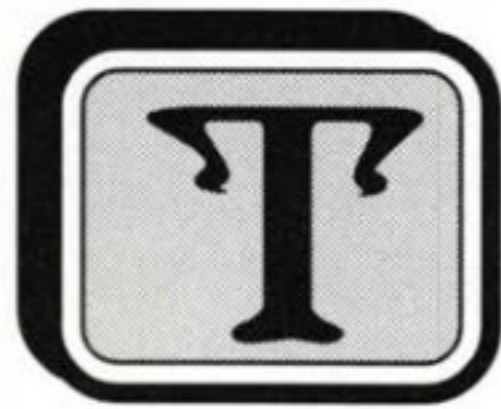
PHOTO SOURCES:

Anchor Bay Entertainment (54-57, 65-69), Criterion (7), DreamWorks (inside, 44, 45, back), Image Entertainment (79), McFarland and Company (72), MGM Home Entertainment (21, 22), Mondo Macabro (70), Poker Industries (36, 37, 40-43), Retromedia Entertainment (62), Seduction Cinema (4), Something Weird Video (13-15, 18, 46-53, 58-61, 63), Tai Seng Video Marketing (17), 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment (26-31), Universal Pictures (73), Warner Bros. (25), Xploited Cinema (32, 35, 38, 39). **ARTWORK:** Pete Fitzgerald (20), Charlie Largent (front). **LOGO & COVER FORMAT:** Radomir Perica (International Design Studios, Bethesda MD).

VIDEO WATCHDOG® is published monthly by Tim & Donna Lucas (PO Box 5283, Cincinnati, OH 45205-0283). VIDEO WATCHDOG® Number 92 (ISSN 1070 9991) is copyright 2002 by Tim & Donna Lucas. All rights reserved. All featured articles and illustrations are copyright 2002 by their respective writers and artists. Reproduction of any material in part or in whole without its creator's permission is strictly forbidden. VIDEO WATCHDOG® accepts no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts, videocassettes, stills, art or other materials. News items are welcome; however, more ambitious contributions are accepted on an invitational basis only. VIDEO WATCHDOG® is a registered trademark of Tim Lucas. **SUBSCRIPTIONS: USA One Year (12 issues) USA Bulk Mail \$48 / USA First Class Mail \$70. OUTSIDE USA Surface Mail \$66 / OUTSIDE USA Air Mail \$88, in US funds only. VISA/MasterCard orders accepted by Mail, Phone 1-800-275-8395 or (513) 471-8989, Fax (707) 356-5432 and E-Mail: VIDEOWD@AOL.COM.**

VISIT THE VIDEO WATCHDOG WEBSITE: <http://www.videowatchdog.com>

THE WATCHDOG BARKS



THROUGHOUT its history, the horror film has repeatedly entered into periods where it attains new plateaux of juicy creativity. Sometimes it happens with the arrival of a new generation of directors (as in the 1970s, with Craven, Cronenberg and Hooper), and sometimes a single, startling, inventive work is enough to send revitalizing ripples through the industry, and the public as well. 1999's **THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT** was surely such a film, and though Americans are only beginning to feel the ripples now, so was Hideo Nakata's Japanese film **RING** [*Ringu*], made around the same time. In only three years, **RING** has generated three sequels and two remakes (including DreamWorks' \$45,000,000 hit, **THE RING**), making it one of the most fecund and profitable ideas horror ever had. All six films, while not of equal quality, are well-made, interesting and intelligent. **RING** is, I think, an instant classic; after watching it on Tartan Video's import DVD, I couldn't quite bring myself to watch Sadako's video, which is provided as a stand-alone supplement. (I mean, what if my phone started to ring afterwards?) And although they tell essentially the same story, **THE RING VIRUS** (a Korean remake) and **THE RING** (with Naomi Watts) manage to twist the material in unexpected, fascinating new directions. In this issue, Richard Harland Smith presents an engrossing critical overview of all the **RING** features, most of which are now available on import DVD.

• • •

I need to correct a major error that appeared in VIDEO WATCHDOG #90. You may remember my editorial in that issue about my new widescreen TV, in which I admitted to adding a sentence or two to RHS's review of **THE DEVIL'S BACKBONE**, about a problem I had discovered with the 16:9 playback of that DVD. Namely, when I viewed this disc in Zoom mode, the subtitles disappeared right off the screen! Since then, I've discovered that the problem was entirely my own—as a consumer still getting to know the in's and out's of his new equipment. A helpful VW reader wrote to inform me of what I would have known, had I gone back to read my DVD player manuals after getting my new TV. To wit: in order to play 16:9 discs accurately,

one's DVD player must be set to "wide." I followed our correspondent's advice and looked at all these discs again. Lo and behold: whereas the subtitles appear below the frame when viewed in 4:3 or standard letterbox mode, in 16:9, the screen is not blown-up (as in "Zoom" mode) but rather unsqueezed from its anamorphic configuration to be viewed in "Full" mode. When viewed this way, the image increases in size and the subtitles—formerly below the image—suddenly appear as a digital overlay *on the frame*! I made this correction immediately on the Mobius Home Video Forum (www.mhvf.net) and on the AOL Classic Horror Film Boards to retract my statement ASAP, but it's important that I also correct myself here—and apologize to Columbia TriStar Home Entertainment for my misstatement about their very fine disc of an extraordinary movie, **THE DEVIL'S BACKBONE**.

• • •

No. I'm not going to do it; I'm not going to eulogize James Coburn in this editorial. We reported much too much death in our previous issue, and besides, the arc of Coburn's work onscreen—and the way he personally affected those people who were lucky enough to meet him—was too cool, too wise, too freaking positive to end on a negative vibe. It is impossible to accept that the jazzy, intelligent, sassy, amused and amusing energy that was James Coburn could cease to exist, so I'm sorry: I don't buy it. He has simply left the party—in search of another. Elsewhere in this issue, I use the excuse of 20th Century Fox's **OUR MAN FLINT** and **IN LIKE FLINT** DVDs to examine this actor's unique appeal at some length, and Joe Dante's "Fleapit Flashbacks" likewise focuses on some choice Coburn films, as well as some others by one of his chief collaborators, Sam Peckinpah. Under the circumstances, I very much regret now that I let other responsibilities prevent me from doing the special **PRESIDENT'S ANALYST** issue that I always hoped to do, which would have given me a chance to make an appointment with the man who was Dr. Sidney Schaefer, Duffy, Dr. Krankheit, Pat Garrett, Sgt. Steiner, Mr. Patman, and a long-time hero of mine.

So would I care for a... draft beer? Yes.

And, for old times' sake, make it a Schlitz Lite.

• • • • • **Tim Lucas**

WATCHDOG NEWS

Misty and Too Much in Love



Seduction Cinema's Blood-Sucking DTV

**Report by
Shane M. Dallmann**

Tina Krause sinks her teeth into a French feast in Donald Farmer's Seduction Cinema release, AN EROTIC VAMPIRE IN PARIS.

Reviewing Seduction Cinema's horror-themed DTV erotica poses something of a challenge. These shot-on-video "filmlook" productions basically exist for one reason: to showcase attractive young actresses in lesbian couplings just one degree shy of the level of explicitness that would send them behind the beaded curtain. Therefore, criticism directed against writing, acting or production values would likely be met with a wide-eyed "So what?" from their target audience; likewise, appreciation of any of these elements would normally

result in a "Yeah, right!" from the same people. Indeed, the sex scenes are so repetitious and interchangeable throughout the Seduction Cinema catalog that the only way to review the titles individually is to focus on the remaining material.

Four recent SC titles have something major in common: they feature stories slight enough to challenge a half-hour TV episode in order to accommodate long, leisurely lesbian sex scenes. For all this, they're remarkably different in tone and approach, though none is quite as ambitious

as such comparatively elaborate Seduction spoofs as **PLAY-MATE OF THE APES** [reviewed VW 83:16].

AN EROTIC VAMPIRE IN PARIS (2002, DD-2.0/+, \$19.99, 79m 11s, DVD-0, was produced by Merrill Aldighieri, OBSESSION: THE FILMS OF JESS FRANCO co-author Lucas Balbo and Donald Farmer (**VAMPIRE COP**), and directed by Farmer as **THE VAMPIRE OF NOTRE DAME**—incidentally, the German release title of Riccardo Freda and Mario Bava's *I vampiri* (1957). It takes full advantage of its on-location City of Lights backdrop, showcasing the famous cathedral inside and out, along with other notable landmarks and locales, making this production the nicest-on-the-eyes of the batch. Young, innocent Caroline (Misty Mundaë), alone in Paris to attend her mother's funeral, falls victim to a robber-rapist (Christophe Bier). Broke and despondent, Caroline accepts an offer of companionship from the mysterious, seductive Isabelle (Tina Krause, billed as "Mia Copia" on the box and "Mia Culpa" [!] on the film itself). After their torrid relationship is briefly sidetracked by an obsessed stalker (Bill Hellfire, who introduced Mundaë to the world in such "Factory 10" productions as **INFAMOUS BONDAGE MURDERS** and **INTERNATIONAL NECKTIE STRANGLER**, and who provides some equal-opportunity male nudity here), Isabelle offers Caroline a chance to avenge herself on her attacker—the catch is that Isabelle must reveal her true vampiric nature in the process.

Farmer has obviously studied his vampire movies. For example, the infamous "candle fondling" sequence from **TWINS OF EVIL** is recreated here (it doesn't stop at fondling, suffice to say), though such traditional elements of vampire lore as the fatal effects of sunlight are blithely ignored.

But the actual seductive powers of Isabelle are taken for granted rather than emotionally explored. When Caroline strips down and eats from the floor at Isabelle's command, she seems to do so simply because the script calls for it, and not because her will has been broken down by her powerful companion. The matter-of-fact approach applies throughout; Caroline isn't supposed to be stupid, but she falls for an utterly pathetic routine supplied by her rapist-to-be ("I've got diamonds... I'll give you a good price... come over here with me, where nobody can see us..."), and Hellfire (probably not his real name) decides to follow the women around at first glance. The rest of the film is a mixture of attractive travelogue and extensive softcore sex, leading to a perfunctory finale (a common fault of Seduction titles). Unless Paris itself is the viewer's primary button-pusher, this trip is dull indeed.

AN EROTIC VAMPIRE IN PARIS offers the most elaborate supplements of the titles covered here. In addition to a 48s trailer, three behind-the-scenes documentaries are included (professionally handled by "Johnny Crash" of the British-based ShashMedia outfit). What's identified as an interview with Misty Mundaë ("it's a sweet film... there's nothing raunchy about it") actually offers screen time to most of the cast and crew. The apparently sincere desire of the actresses to relate to their characters and bring a special story to life can induce sympathy pangs in light of the actual feature—but it's a bit more difficult to believe that Krause (called by her real name here) didn't really know what was expected of her until she was *en route* to Paris. Donald Farmer is granted a separate interview, and "Paris Behind the Scenes" is a 14m 45s

"making of" segment for which the filmmakers provided generous cooperation to ShashMedia (Seduction usually handles such chores itself). Fourteen untitled chapters stops are included, none of which can be accessed separately through the menu (another Seduction constant). As always, plenty of Seduction trailers and website plugs are provided, as well.

MY VAMPIRE LOVER (2002, DD-2.0/+, \$19.99, 82m 59s, DVD-0), directed by George Freeway, gives us Paige Richards as Monique, a suburban vampire who seduces woman after woman in search of her perfect "soul-mate," only to give in and fatally bite them, one after another. Her curious, married neighbor Traci (Syn DeVil) finds herself drawn into her own inevitable encounter with Monique, but Chip the cable installer (Brock Chopoli) plans to put an end to Monique's activities with the help of his initially disbelieving co-workers. What isn't immediately apparent from the opening scenes (or the DVD case description) is that this one's an *intentional* comedy: it fancies itself the **AIRPLANE!** of low-budget, DTV lesbian vampire fare. Two detectives named "Neil and Bob" (one of them played by the director) ask a witness if he has "anything else to add," to which the subject responds by handing over a piece of paper marked "24 + 13" in one gut-bursting highlight. Katie Jordon plays a canvassing assembly-woman (sure) named "Megan Ryan," prominently-billed Misty Mundaë shows up in a Catholic schoolgirl uniform ("Forgive me, Father, but I'm about to sin and be a very naughty little girl"), Darian Caine appears as a plumber (complete with "crack" exposure), and Chip utters the unforgettable line "What the lesbian hell is going on in there?" before he peeks into

a fateful window on “Hooter Avenue.” It isn’t likely that anyone will use the replay function to savor the comedy stylings of the cast. The signature sex, of course, eventually becomes fast-forward fodder, and the ending is especially clumsy (and seemingly incomplete), but this effort is about as “innocuous” as an Adults-Only feature can be. Sixteen untitled chapters have been provided, and the DVD supplements include the trailer, a deleted scene in which Monique performs a lap dance for a female client, 11m 30s worth of behind-the-scenes footage and the usual assortment of Seduction Cinema promos.

Despite the title, **VAMPIRE OBSESSION** (2001, DD-2.0/+, \$19.99, 75m, DVD-0)—written and directed by Jim Bacchus—features no supernatural content and could scarcely be further removed in tone from the above entry. Anouschka plays Wendy, professionally known as lesbian prostitute “Trixie,” who enjoys a domestic relationship with her roommate (Darian Caine). But whenever Wendy leaves for work, Caine degenerates into pathological grief and loneliness (she begins by tearing her T-shirt off, pro-wrestling style, and later starts using her prescription medication bottles as building blocks). All the worse for her that Wendy encounters a seductress named Alexis (Jade DuBair)—whose handsome payments persuade Wendy first to allow her to indulge in her blood-drinking fetish (this “vampire” may be the first ever to wear a crucifix, incidentally); and then to spend an entire week with her in her hotel room. The “draining,” kinky, but no-real-harm-done arrangement doesn’t last long. When Alexis brings an extra woman to join the fun, the new arrival leaves the room in a garbage bag after a

soak in the “Bathory” tub. And as Wendy’s initial horror gives way to excitement (and active participation), her roommate discovers where she’s staying...

More effort than usual is discernible in the performances here (indeed, Anouschka’s sex scenes scarcely qualify as simulation), but once again, it’s the script that determines all reactions. An attempt at Anthony Perkins-style revulsion at the sight of a bloody bathroom is laughable, and there’s no reason to believe that an unwilling abductee would switch from “No, no, no!” to “Yes, yes, yes!” at the drop of a hat. (This sequence is particularly strange—from what is supposed to be a bus stop, the aggressors propel their victim into what appears to be Seduction’s warehouse: boxes marked “VAMPIRE’S EMBRACE” and “ZOMBIE DOOM” are all over the place, but there’s a convenient mattress in the middle of the floor! A poster for the mondo video **TRACES OF DEATH** can be partially seen on Wendy’s wall at one point, as well.) Another abrupt ending features a role-reversal that’s supposed to be ironic, but which seems somewhat misdirected, if we’re to understand these characters at all.

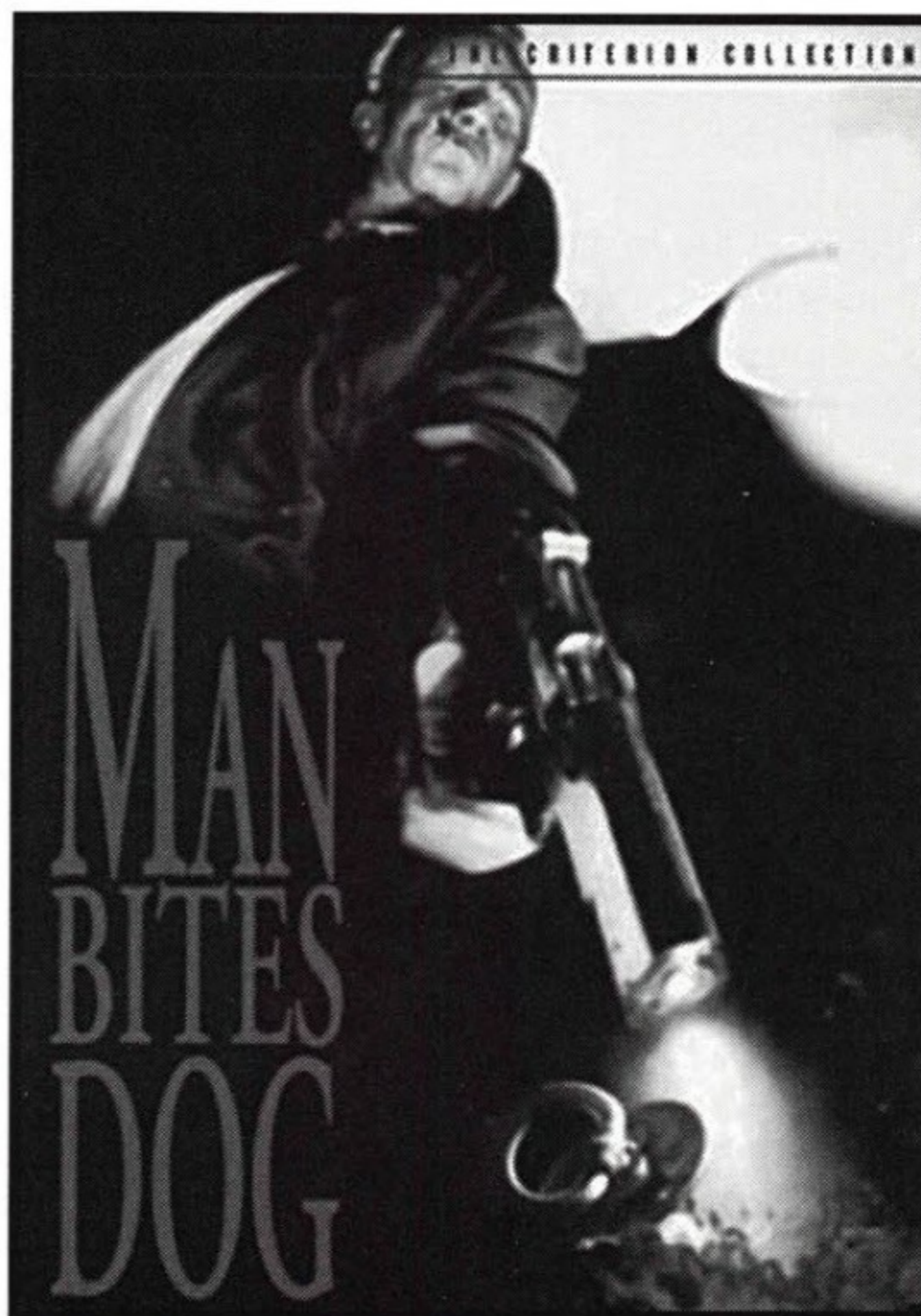
VAMPIRE OBSESSION is given 16 untitled chapters, and the cover art featuring a fanged Anouschka is a blatant cheat. Some mild but noticeable artifacting is visible on overly bright areas, as opposed to the usual dark zones. As always, the trailer is provided as a separate option, but here, the obligatory “behind the scenes” supplement lasts a whopping 47m 27s! From our perspective, most of this consists of the sex scenes being replayed with the voices of the crew substituting for the soundtrack music, but some of the interplay is interesting—particularly when

DuBair suggests a use for her crucifix that sparks a “Seen **THE EXORCIST?**” banter between cast and crew. There’s also a mock-serious segment in which a crewmember soberly discusses the importance of a platonic, professional attitude on such a production, only to be pounced on by a nearly-nude Caine, whose “naughty bits” must be carefully hidden during the setup of her “kitchen breakdown” scene. The bonus trailers are the most interesting of the batch, because they include a selection of “Retro-Seduction Cinema” titles: appropriate epics from the 1970s acquired by the label, including the INGA films and such Al Adamson efforts as **THE NAUGHTY STEWARDESSES** and **NURSE SHERRI** (retitled **THE POSSESSION OF NURSE SHERRI** on Retro-Seduction’s release, but not on the trailer found here).

The good news is, it may not be necessary to have seen the first two installments of **THE EROTIC WITCH PROJECT** in order to understand what’s happening in **WITCHBABE: THE EROTIC WITCH PROJECT III** (2002, DD-2.0/+, \$19.99, 71m 52s, DVD-0). An obligatory “shaky camcorder” prologue shows an amorous encounter (well, only the female half of it) being interrupted by the discovery of a plastic dime-store skeleton meant to represent actual human remains in the woods of “Bacchusville” (an inside reference to Seduction director Jim Bacchus, though this outing was written and directed by Terry M. West). In response to reporters demanding to know if this is final proof that the Erotic Witch was real, the local sheriff snaps “Smoke my underwear!” (Yep, this one’s a comedy, too.) As Darian Caine is inspired to look up local history, the film flashes back to the year 1800. Back

then, the population of Bacchusville, under the leadership of the tyrannical Puritan Mayor Rudolph (hmm...), seems to consist of Amish farmers, Wild West cowboys and a mincing, beret-wearing French artist (whose medium of choice was apparently inspired by recent and current NEA controversies). The mayor's undersexed wife Martha (Laurie Wallace) ignores a posted warning of an escaped gorilla (complete with what appears to be a computer printout photo) and takes a "self-satisfying" journey in the woods, only to be attacked by said ape (a "somewhat" unconvincing suit accompanied by squirrel-monkey sound effects). But Helena Pottsworth (Paige Richards), supposedly an ancient crone but in fact the Erotic Witch, saves the day—promptly seducing Martha. From there, other innocent townswomen (Misty Munda, Barbara Joyce, Lora Renee) are quickly won over—men are drawn in, as well, but they only get to watch. Mayor Rudolph and his ever-dwindling faithful determine to put a stop to immorality and burn the witch at the stake. Meanwhile, Debbie Rochon joins Caine in the modern day wraparound.

The approach to comedy here is no more sophisticated than in **MY VAMPIRE LOVER**, but more time is spent building up to certain punchlines, allowing for some fairly amusing scenes (such as one in which the local reverend speeds through his scheduled "fire and brimstone" sermon so that he can get back to the "second coming" promised by an off-screen voice). It's silly, it's lowbrow, and it's (of course) a loose framework for the only real reason it exists, but the attention paid to the goofy characters—minus any obligation to take them seriously—works in this project's definite favor



(though one *might* ask why the exhausted orgy participants all wake up fully dressed).

WITCHBABE scores 12 untitled chapters, a trailer and a scant (by comparison) 9m 16s of behind the scenes footage. The same "bright light" artifacting is apparent, and the usual Seduction Cinema promo assortment (with no Retro-Seduction Cinema titles this time) is available, demonstrating yet again that, if you like any of these movies, there's *plenty* more where they came from.

Films of Pedigree from Criterion

Criterion has released the complete, uncut version of the controversial **MAN BITES DOG** (onscreen title: ***C'est arrivé près chez vous***, "It Happened in Your Neighborhood") on DVD \$29.95) in a letterboxed

transfer in 16:9 anamorphic widescreen. The film, made by then Belgian student filmmakers Rémy Belvaux, André Bonzel, and Benoit Poelvoorde—which won the International Critics' Prize at the 1992 Cannes Film Festival—was previously issued on VHS in 1993 by Fox Lorber (91m 55s, VW 20:16) and in an "unrated edited" version. Voyager/Criterion issued the film in a letterboxed LD in early 1994 utilizing the same version of the film as Fox Lorber did.

Criterion's new DVD issue presents the complete version of the film, running 95m 58s, which includes the harrowing 2m 48s sequence in which Ben (Benoit Poelvoorde) chases down and kills a child who had witnessed Ben murdering his father. Another powerful scene shows Ben and the filmmakers break into a couple's apartment and rape the woman, followed by a section in which the couple are revealed to have been brutally

murdered. Although these two scenes may suggest that **MAN BITES DOG** might be a graphic horror film, it is in fact a satirical black comedy about filmmaking. Although it does foreground its cinematic apparatus—the camera crew is an important part of the story—which encourages the view that the film is a satire about media violence, we find it to be a statement about how murder and violence can be carried out in an utterly rational, disinterested fashion. Is mass murder always accomplished by individuals who are outwardly and explicitly mad? Much of the film’s considerable humor lies in Ben’s rational exterior (and his poetic sense) which stands in stark contrast to the murders he commits. We thus see it as closer in spirit to Jean-Pierre Melville’s **THE SAMURAI** (1967) than Haskell Wexler’s **MEDIUM COOL** (1968). We also noticed how certain of its features may have inspired other student film projects, such as **THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT**: its “reality TV” aesthetic of a *faux* documentary shot in grainy B&W; the film crew consisting of three individuals who use their own proper first names; the jittery hand-held camerawork during chase scenes; and the final shot, consisting of the camera falling to the floor on its side, recording action until the film eventually runs out.

The supplements on Criterion’s DVD duplicate those found on its earlier LD: an 8m 58s interview with the filmmakers shot in 1993, and the filmmakers’ delightful 11m 58s short from 1989, **Pas de C4 pour Daniel-Daniel** (“No C4 for Daniel-Daniel”), a *faux* trailer for a non-existent secret agent film. The disc also includes the original theatrical trailer (1m 40s), and 20 chapter stops, with optional English subtitles. The keepcase booklet also

includes a new short essay about the film by filmmaker André Bonzel, who also oversaw the disc transfer.

Criterion has also issued on DVD René Clair’s delightful 1931 sound comedy with trenchant social commentary, **À nous la liberté** (“Liberty Is Ours,” \$29.95) which we reviewed as a Home Vision Entertainment VHS issue in VW 77:8. Starring Raymond Cordy and Henri Marchand, the story consists of the rags-to-riches (and back again) adventures of two former jailbirds. Utilizing the same elements for the transfer that were used for the VHS edition, the picture is remarkably crisp and clear, with good contrasts, and has minimal speckling and scratches. The disc includes several valuable supplements not included on the VHS edition, among them two deleted scenes totaling 6m 29s, and a very interesting audio essay by David Robinson concerning the lawsuit the producers of **À nous la liberté** brought against Charlie Chaplin, feeling that Chaplin had stolen ideas from their film for his **MODERN TIMES** (1936). As Robinson points out, the lawsuit was rather dubious given that there are only some tenuous points of contact between the two films, and the lawsuit caused René Clair no slight discomfort, as he had great admiration for Chaplin’s films.

Another valuable supplement is a windowboxed presentation of Clair’s seminal Surrealist short from 1924, **Entr’acte** (20m 2s), which he made in collaboration with painter Francis Picabia and composer Erik Satie. The disc also includes a 1998 video interview with Madame Bronja Clair. Optional English subtitles are included, and the booklet contains insightful liner notes by Michael Atkinson. —Rebecca & Sam Umland

Tai Seng, Tai Seng They’re Alright! Tai Seng, Tai Seng Fight! Fight! Fight!

Tai Seng’s recent “Martial Arts Theater” releases include several toplined by major fan favorites. Some of Chang Cheh’s regular stars got together for **NINJA IN THE DEADLY TRAP** (1983, 90m 35s), which was directed by popular “Venom” Phillip Kwok Tsui and compares favorably to the team’s previous productions. In the Ming Dynasty, Japanese pirates wreak havoc along the Chinese coast and the situation becomes even more desperate when bands of ninjas arrive to target Chinese military commander Ti Lung. The Master of the Three Arts (who possesses a book illustrating various *ninjitsu* techniques) is the only one who can combat this new enemy, so he pledges that his students (Chiang Sheng, Lu Feng, and Phillip Kwok Tsui) will join Ti’s army in their fight to wipe out the killers. Meanwhile, ninja leader Yasuaki Kurota (**FIST OF LEGEND**) has dispatched assassins to eliminate the General, with two having managed to infiltrate his palace. In contrast to the Shaw Brothers films, a large portion of the action takes place outside, rather than in the studio, giving this film an immediately different look and feel. Kwok largely dispenses with his mentor’s familiar theme of male bonding, concentrating on action instead. The plot is routine, recycling components from Chang’s **THE FIVE DEADLY VENOMS** and **SUPER NINJAS** (which was produced around the same time), and strongman Lo Mang is missed, but there are some effective setpieces and the end result remains solid genre fare. The 1985 Ocean Shores



*Paul Chu and Angela Mao battle murderous Ching officials for possession of a Buddhist relic in **THE LEGENDARY STRIKE**.*

transfer looks colorful and reasonably sharp, though the cropping is a constant annoyance.

Ti Lung also heads the cast of Pao Hsueh-li's **KUNG FU EMPEROR** (1981; 92m 18s), an uneven but moderately entertaining Taiwanese effort with above-average production values. Ti plays a righteous prince, fourth in line to the throne, who poses as a clumsy dullard in order to help Shaolin Temple prevent a corrupt regime from taking power in the region. While spending time outside the palace among the townspeople, Ti befriends a pair of martially adept street performers (Tan Tao-liang and Bruce Lai), who help him to enact a desperate plan. The emperor has become critically ill and favors his 14th son as heir; however, the prince's corrupt uncle (Chen Sing) seeks to claim power for himself by using the young man as a puppet, so Ti plots to secretly rewrite his father's will, before it can be read and his successor made public.

The story suffers from too many digressions and odd comic interludes, but Ti is in terrific form: his moves are limber and swift and his performance transcends the shallow melodrama. Shih Szu also appears, but does not participate in the action. Picture quality is very good by Ocean Shores standards, with rich colors, good contrasts, and a sharp image. Print wear and the cropping of the scope frame are not severe enough to be overly detrimental. There are brief patches during fight sequences where the sound strays out-of-sync, but this appears to be a fault of the original mix. The credits are video-burned and identify the picture as **EMPEROR OF KUNG FU**.

Few martial arts stars are as beloved as Angela Mao Ying. While not as memorable as the vehicles she and director Huang Feng did for Golden Harvest, **THE LEGENDARY STRIKE** (1978; 88m 25s) is better than most independent productions. A sacred Buddhist

relic is at the center of the intrigue, with Ching Dynasty prince Carter Wong determined to possess it at all costs. Other interested parties include Ming rebel Paul Chu Kong (**THE KILLER**), crooked Shaolin monk Kam Kong (who played the blind villain in **MASTER OF THE FLYING GUILLOTINE**), Ching general Chen Sing and lackey Casanova Wong, and some Korean agents, led by Mao. When the swordsman transporting the relic is killed, everyone seeks to obtain his body, suspecting that the man may have swallowed it before succumbing to his injuries. The storyline is more involved than the usual "Abolish Ching, Restore Ming" affair, with a number of secret identities and societies figuring into the intrigue. Chu is justifiably better known as an actor than a fighter, but all the genre regulars are in good form and Huang makes the most of some picturesque Taiwan locations (though some very contemporary looking structures can

be seen in the backgrounds of a few set-ups). Cropping of the scope frame is handled adequately, but colors are light, the sound is noisy, and the print contains much wear and some disruptive splices.

In an interview a few years ago, Jackie Chan noted that period martial arts films experienced a decline in box office receipts thanks to a preponderance of what might be called "fight-fight-fight" movies. These tedious cheapies offered a wealth of kung fu, but little or no context to explain why people were beating one another to death. Yu Han-sang's **THE MASTER OF DEATH** (1982; 89m 55s) is a prime example of the "FFF" film, with fights breaking out so regularly and with so little pretext, you can set your watch by them. Chi Kuan-chun (**5 MASTERS OF DEATH, EAGLE'S CLAW**) stars as a young master anxious to avenge the slaughter of his parents at the hands of corrupt marshal Lo Lieh. Before that death duel can take place, Chi must defeat a small army of assassins Lo has dispatched to take care of him. Save for a final reel entrance by Chen Sing to introduce an easily anticipated twist, that's about it for the story and, despite the high quantity, the martial arts are strictly run-of-the-mill. Judy Lee/Chia Ling and Wu Ma appear in a casino sequence that has nothing to do with the storyline (and was almost certainly recycled from another picture, in order to get the running time up to 90m). The image is very soft with faded, brownish hues.

Each of these titles is available on VHS (HF, \$9.95) and region-free DVD (DD-2.0, \$14.95); three of the latter versions offer audio commentaries by Ric Meyers and Bobby Samuels, while Meyers goes it alone on **THE LEGENDARY STRIKE**. —John Charles

DVD Update

AND THEN THERE WERE NONE

1945, Corinth Films/Image Entertainment, DD-1.0/+, \$14.99, 96m 55s, DVD-0

Reviewing VCI Home Video's DVD of this frothy but charming adaptation of Agatha Christie's merciless 1939 whodunit **TEN LITTLE NIGGERS** (produced and directed by René Clair for 20th Century Fox), Kim Newman opined the shabby condition of the source print used for the Region 1 disc (the reader is hereby referred to VW 69:36 for Kim's thoughtful analysis) and expressed his feeling that **AND THEN THERE WERE NONE**'s "definitive presentation at some point would be welcome." Sadly, Image Entertainment's more recent all-region DVD hardly counts for much of an improvement. Despite the announcement that this transfer comes "from original elements," the print in question is roundly done in by the usual suspects of celluloid damage: speckles, tears, scratches, split frames, reel change marks and instances of high grain, as well as a soundtrack subject to occasional sound drops. (In especially rough condition is the 1m 10s American title sequence, which looks at least one generation removed from the body of the film and is bedeviled by a distracting degree of jitter.) While some scenes are surpassingly fine (the approach to the island), doing justice to the cinematography of Lucien Andriot, others are overly bright (the first dinner), with weak contrasts that rob character from the faces of the cast. As was the case with the VCI disc, Image's DVD is watchable but this digital "upgrade" is little better than what could be seen on an old VHS tape.

While VCI afforded 24 chapters to their disc, Image allows half that number and the only extra is the original British title sequence (1m 10s), which preserves for posterity Agatha Christie's original title. (This footage is preceded by a disclaimer putting the offensive title in the proper historical context, as a reference to a Victorian music hall tune.) The menu screens are a bit drab (the main menu features a lineup of seven of the characters/suspects—why not all ten?), but do employ cute murder weapon icons (a pistol, a noose, a hypodermic needle, a hatchet) to allow the viewer to toggle between chapters. Image's switch from flimsy snapper DVD cases to the more sturdy keepcase is welcome, however, giving titles in "The Wade Williams Collection" a more substantial feel—but if this collection is going to stay competitive, it really has to make greater inroads to film restoration. —Richard Harland Smith

VAMPIRE IN BROOKLYN

1995, Paramount Home Entertainment, DD-5.1/MA/16:9/LB/ST/CC/+, \$24.99, 101m 50s, DVD-1

John Charles reviewed the original tape and laserdisc release of this Wes Craven/Eddie Murphy collaboration in VW 34:24. In 1995, this was a wrong move for Murphy and an unrecognizable effort from Craven, as both artists struggled to reclaim their popularity with audiences. Today, while the film still seems a more appropriate directorial vehicle for John Landis than for Craven, Murphy's performance is worth revisiting. The two "extra" characters in which he indulges are typical of his (still impressive) "chameleon" gimmick, but the vampire Maximilian is played as a remarkably straight-up, respectable horror film centerpiece

which scores more points when viewed out of its original context as a self-conscious "change of pace."

An agreeable reacquaintance with **VAMPIRE IN BROOKLYN** has been offered by Paramount in a widescreen (1:85:1) DVD release. The flawless image has been enhanced for widescreen televisions and is accompanied by an excellent 5.1 Dolby Digital Surround soundtrack remix (the original 2.0 version remains available as an option, while a French-language stereo soundtrack is included, as well). The optional English subtitles reproduce the paraphrasing found on the old tape and laserdisc releases. A reasonable 17 chapters have been assigned to the feature, and the 2m 17s theatrical trailer is the only extra feature. —Shane M. Dallmann

VENOMOUS

2001, 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, DD-5.1 & 2.0/MA/LB/ST/CC/+, \$34.98, 97m 4s, DVD-1

We reviewed a VHS screener of this DTV snake thriller in VW 80:23, and advance information we conveyed about the DVD version did not fully jibe with the disc that eventually hit the streets. In contrast to the norm for Fox, the 1.85:1 transfer here is not anamorphic, though it still looks good, with a very crisp image and solid hues. The disc offers both 5.1 and 2.0 options; neither really delivers much in the way of rear channel activity, but the mix serves the material adequately. There is no behind-the-scenes featurette, as we incorrectly stated, but we do receive a small photo gallery, filmographies, a video promo trailer, and an interesting commentary from director Fred Olen Ray. While never acknowledging his use of footage from other pictures, Ray

does a thorough job of discussing the difficulties the crew had working with the numerous rattlers (which were not milked of venom, so that the handlers would be more careful with them—a decision that did not go down well with the actors). He also discusses an accident on the first day of shooting, that meant altering an already tight schedule, and provides some tips on how to make potentially static exposition scenes as visually interesting as possible, when time and money do not allow for extensive coverage. The film's obvious debt to **OUTBREAK** is not discussed, but Ray reveals that the quarantine suits worn by his actors were the ones originally created for that Wolfgang Petersen picture. His comments also explain the reasons behind two elements we criticized in the original review: Greg Collins' black eye was an injury the actor suffered just prior to shooting and the producers removed a scene showing the safe recovery of a kitten attacked by one of the snakes (with the sequence no longer there, a young child manages to instantly overcome the trauma of his pet being horribly killed). A French dubtrack in 2.0, and English captions and Spanish subtitles are available. One final notation: we have incorrectly stated on at least two occasions that "Noble Henry" is a pseudonym for Jim Wynorski; we have since learned that this behind-the-scenes phantom is actually Andrew Stevens—with the sole exception of **VIRTUAL DESIRE**, which was co-directed by Ray and Jim Wynorski as "Noble Henry." We apologize for the misinformation, but feel safe in stating that none of the aforementioned gentlemen are actually "Deep Throat," "Boris Lugosi" or "Nash the Slash." —John Charles 

SOURCES

ANCHOR BAY ENTERTAINMENT

www.anchorbayent.com
1699 Stutz Avenue
Troy, MI 48084
248-816-0909
Fax: 248-816-3335

MONDO MACABRO

www.mondomacabro.co.uk
Boum Productions
PO Box 3336
Brighton BN2 3GW
United Kingdom

POKER INDUSTRIES

www.pokerindustries.com
22D Old Matawan Road
Old Bridge, NJ 08857

RETROMEDIA ENTERTAINMENT

www.retromedia.org
6260 Laurel Canyon Blvd. #201
N Hollywood, CA 91606

SEDUCTION CINEMA

www.seductioncinema.com
c/o El Independent Cinema
68 Forest St.
Montclair, NJ 07042
973-509-1616
Fax: 973-509-3530

SOMETHING WEIRD VIDEO

www.somethingweird.com
PO Box 33664
Seattle, WA 98133
206-361-3759

TAI SENG VIDEO MARKETING

http://secure.taiseng.com/
taisengMain
170 S. Spruce Ave. #200
S San Francisco, CA 94080
800-888-3836 or
650-871-8118

XPLOITED CINEMA

www.xploitedcinema.com
54 S Portage Path #1
Akron, OH 44303-1036

VIDEO TAPE VINE

Warning: *Mr. Peek-a-Boo's Peeping in the Room of Chains!*

A NOTE ON TIMINGS

The timings listed for the following tapes reflect only the length of the film itself, and do not include such ephemera as video company logos, FBI warnings, supplementary trailers, or MPAA ratings certificates. The only exceptions to this rule are those films in which the soundtrack is first heard while the distributor's logo is still onscreen.

CAPTURE THAT CAPSULE!

aka **SPY SQUAD**

1961, *Something Weird Video*,
HF, \$20.00 ppd, 77m 25s, VHS

A team of communist spies use radio transmissions to sabotage a US space launch, then head out into the ocean to retrieve the fallen capsule (which looks like a megaphone with the ends plugged up) before the Army can reach it. Luckily for all red-blooded, freedom-loving Americans, the government is onto them: the tiny capsule is actually a decoy containing a transmitter. Law enforcement teams are soon in pursuit but the Red troublemakers prove elusive, murdering a skindiver and stealing his hot rod and, then, inadvertently crashing a society pool party.

This incredibly minimalist B&W production offers a predictably ludicrous depiction of communist forces and their operatives, and is highlighted by one of the least charismatic casts in memory. To a man, the performers (including one Richard Miller—not *the* Dick Miller, alas) are nondescript everyman types whose resumé's probably consisted of parts like "Man at Bar"

and "Third Detective on Scene" before director Will Zens (**HOT SUMMER IN BAREFOOT COUNTY**) tapped them for this impoverished yakfest. For the majority of its running time, the picture plays like a painfully distended episode of *HIGHWAY PATROL*, with endless driving and surveillance sequences occasionally broken by agents barking orders into their car radios or engaging in "So, I says to the wife..." small talk. The villains, meanwhile, make Boris Badenov and Natasha Fatale look like the Leningrad

KEY

+	Supplements
16:9	WS TV Adaptable
CC	Closed Captioned
D	Digital
DD	Dolby Digital
DTS	Digital Theater Systems (Audio)
DVD-0	No Region Code
DVD-1	USA, Canada
DVD-2	Europe, Japan
HF	Hi-Fi
LB	Letterboxed
MA	Multiple Audio
NSR	No Suggested Retail
OOP	Out of Print
P&S	Pan&Scan
S	Stereo
SS	Surround Sound
ST	Subtitles



Even a child proves too much for the guileless communist agents in CAPTURE THAT CAPSULE!

braintrust, arguing over unbelievably trivial issues ("You do what I tell you, Comrade Joe! The party didn't send you on this jaunt so you could sass your superiors!") and unable to arrive at their rendezvous point without being humiliated by a child and a drunken socialite (who thinks the capsule contains booze!). Lacking in style, excitement, and anything approaching common sense, **CAPTURE THAT CAPSULE!** makes a perfect co-feature for Coleman Francis' even more mind-boggling Bay of Pigs invasion opus, **RED ZONE CUBA** (aka **NIGHT TRAIN TO MUNDO FINE**).

Derived from a decent 16mm TV print bearing the picture's alternate title, **SPY SQUAD**, the image looks soft, with light blacks and weak contrasts. The sound is a bit waterlogged and some zealous TV censor blipped the word "crap" out of a heated dramatic exchange. The tape is part of the Johnny Legend's "Untamed Video" series and His Hairiness appears before and after the feature. A **SPY SQUAD** trailer is also included and the

FBI Warning is read aloud by no less a personage than Gunnar "Leatherface" Hansen! The usual SWV bug does not put in an appearance. —John Charles

LEGEND OF HORROR

1960/71, *Something Weird Video*, HF, \$20.00 ppd, 75m 31s, VHS

Here is a US/Argentinian patchwork period horror oddity that was little seen and long forgotten until *Something Weird* unearthed a print in some deep, dark vault of cinematic discards. **LEGEND OF HORROR** initially seems to be the story of Pierre Frontiere, sentenced to 15 years of hard labor for the attempted seduction of the daughter of a powerful, over-protective mayor. However, when Pierre is forced to share a cell with Sidney (a crazy old coot who talks endlessly to his pet rat Tommy), the focus of the story shifts elsewhere. Pierre gradually gains Sidney's confidence and learns of a secret tunnel the latter has been working on for several years. One evening, the old man becomes delirious and tells his cellmate

about the events which befell him at the age of 21. At this point, we segue into a 19m flashback—actually, an excerpt from a 1960 Argentinian adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart," previously the third segment in the anthology thriller **Obras Maestras** (1960). Seeking work and a place to stay, Sidney visited his grotesque, one-eyed Uncle Thorbert, who agreed to let the young man toil in his clock shop in exchange for room and board. Sidney secretly befriended a young crippled boy (also named Tommy) whom the uncle despised; when the child was found drowned, Thorbert was delighted, much to Sidney's dismay. Jumping back to the "present" day, Pierre and Sidney manage to escape and head across the countryside, getting a brief respite from danger at a farm owned by one of Pierre's old girlfriends (**ORGY OF THE DEAD**'s Fawn Silver). However, Sidney's dementia soon overtakes him and—after another lengthy excerpt from the Argentinian production showing the climax of the original Poe story—the American footage offers its own shocking finale.

The actual onscreen title here is **EDGAR ALLEN POE'S LEGEND OF HORROR** (sic) and the fact that the producers managed to misspell Poe's name is entirely fitting, given the looniness of everything else they did. The American footage, directed by Bill Davies, is awkwardly staged, laughably performed, hilariously undercast (Pierre and Sidney represent about half of the inmate population), and scored largely with the Attilio Mineo library cues from **THE ASTOUNDING SHE MONSTER**. It is also very choppy; judging by the constant disruptions in the soundtrack, the distributor must have decided to cut a reel or so after the final sound

mix had been completed. (The flashbacks are also plagued by this butchery, but not as extensively.) The prison exteriors are represented solely by stock footage matte shots of the castle from **PIT AND THE PENDULUM** (cropped and printed in B&W to match the spherical footage surrounding them) and, while the guard uniforms appear to be French, the surrounding countryside is strictly Southern California. (Shades of **THE TERROR!**) Meanwhile, some graveyard exteriors in the final reel are right out of **THE PREMATURE BURIAL**, with Hazel Court visibly strolling through the background of one shot, though no women appear in the scene! The horror sequences are equally nonsensical. Jumpy stop-motion "Magicmation" is used to show a knife piercing a guard's face, slitting a throat, and then plunging into a third man's chest! A death in the final moments is presented in color, but as the victim's face is obscured, this too may have been lifted from another movie!

In stark contrast, the Argentinian components (from Enrique

Carreras, credited here as "Flash Back Director,") feature solid production values, atmospheric cinematography, and what appear to be highly competent performances, though confounded by some awful English dubbing. (The first two stories from **Obras Maestras** were acquired by Jack H. Harris and issued stateside in 1965 as **MASTER OF HORROR**; that version received a second release in 1971 on a double bill with **MASTER OF TERROR**, a retitling of Harris' 1959 hit **THE 4-D MAN**). Frank Henenlotter's liner notes indicate that **LEGEND OF HORROR** may have been cobbled together as early as 1966, but it carries a 1971 copyright and did not hit theaters until a year later, when Ellman Enterprises paired it with Gene Nash's equally obscure **DIABOLIC WEDDING**. If the IMDb is to be believed, that film is apparently a mixture of American and Peruvian footage. Ah, the glory days of '70s exploitation cinema, when you could buy a ticket never quite knowing what you were getting into!

The B&W image is a little soft, but the American footage

only displays significant wear at the reel change points. The older movie elements look a bit more worn, but still presentable. Contrasts are harsh during exteriors, but the transfer and audio are good enough. —John Charles

THE MAGIC SERPENT

Kairyu daikessen

"Battle of the Dragons"

1966, *Something Weird Video*, \$20.00 ppd, 84m 3s, VHS

Of all the Japanese productions handled by American International Television, this period fantasy is fondly remembered by many viewers as being the most eye-opening of the lot. As the film opens, Lord Ogata is betrayed and murdered by ninjas in league with traitors Yuki Daijo (Bin Amatsu) and Orukimaru (Ryutaro Otomo). The life of Ogata's young son, Prince Ikazukimaru, is threatened when Orukimaru transforms himself into a dragon, but the boy is saved when a giant eagle swoops down, carrying him to safety. The story picks up several years later, with Ikazukimaru (Hiroki Matsukata, who appeared in several Toei ninja movies around this time) studying under the elderly master who had previously rescued him from the dragon. The young prince possesses magical powers that allow him to make tremendous leaps and survive being decapitated by a ninja assassin. A former student of Ikazukimaru's master, Orukimaru returns to the old man's home and fatally wounds him. Before he dies, the master passes along to his protégé a scroll revealing the ninja power of invisibility. Joined by teenage girl Tsunate (Tomoko Ogawa), Ikazukimaru sets out to kill Yuki Daijo but finds that he is no match for Orukimaru's magic. The latter hopes to lure the prince into a trap, but the

The miracle of "Magicmation" makes its first (and last) appearance in the bizarre composite feature LEGEND OF HORROR.





Ninjas prove no match for the shape-shifting (headless!) hero of Toei's colorful period fantasy, THE MAGIC SERPENT.

deposed royal survives and transforms into a giant fire-breathing toad for a final duel against Orukimaru—who obliges by changing into his dragon form.

In addition to offering what was likely the earliest ninja encounter shown in America, Tetsuya Yamauchi's **MAGIC SERPENT** (onscreen title) may also have been Westerners' introduction to the sort of fantastic combat that would later be a staple of HK fantasy cinema. Based on "Jiraiya," a famous tale about a shape-shifting ninja of that name, this Toei production is reminiscent of Daiei's **MAJIN, THE MONSTER OF TERROR** from the same year, which also featured treacherous nobles, feudal settings, and swordplay. **MAGIC SERPENT** lacks the power of that film, but remains a diverting and energetic blend of fantasy and *kaiju eiga* (in addition to the aforementioned giants, a spider possessing abilities seemingly inspired by Mothra turns up for the climax); it boasts stark visuals (an appearance by the ghosts of Lord Ogata and his

followers is atmospherically presented in B&W) and effects on par with those seen in Toho productions of the time.

The English version under review was prepared at Titra Sound Studios (credited here as Titan) and supervised by Bret "The Shadow" Morrison. The dubbing is average as these films go, with the voice artists adopting the usual exaggerated Japanese accents, but for some reason, Titra dropped all of Toei's original monster noises and replaced them with *kaiju* sound effects lifted from Toho films! Consequently, the Magic Serpent's roars are a mix of the signature sounds made by Godzilla, Mothra, and the Green Gargantua, while the toad is given the distinctive cry of Rodan! Also, in an odd change from the norm, the dubbing script provides the hero with a more complicated name than he had in the original! "Jiraiya" was originally also the name of Matsukata's character, but Titra changed it to the tongue-twisting "Ikazukimaru."

The AIP-TV 16mm source print is in good condition, but the cropping of the scope frame ruins a number of beautiful compositions. The blown-up image also tends to be grainy and makes the wires manipulating the monsters painfully obvious. The sound is a bit tinny, but sufficient. Two deaths during an early swordfight have been truncated here; it is not clear whether the cuts were imposed by AIP, local TV station censors, or caused by breaks in the print. By checking the pristine (but, alas, untranslated) Toei Video version (2.30:1; 85m 23s), we were able to determine that no bloodshed occurs during these missing seconds. —John Charles

MISTER PEEK-A-BOO

Le Passe-muraille

"The Past Wall"

1951, Englewood Entertainment, HF, \$14.98, 74m 19s, VHS

Lowly clerk Leon Dutilleul (French comedian Bourvil) returns home soused late one evening and is faced with a night on the stoop when his sister's obnoxious husband refuses to unbolt the door for him. However, before he knows it, Leon has successfully made it into his bedroom and settles in for the night. It is only when he is clean and sober the next morning that Leon realizes he can now walk through walls! His newfound ability confounds everyone, but easy-going Leon is interested mainly in winning the affections of Suzan (**THE MAN IN THE WHITE SUIT**'s Joan Greenwood). However, this lovely English blonde is actually a masked cat burglar and, when Leon witnesses her theft of a valuable necklace, he "breaks" into her apartment, takes the jewels, and returns them to their rightful owner. Determined to "save" Suzan from an inevitable



Comedian Bourvil plays an amiable *voleur* in the romantic farce *MISTER PEEK-A-BOO*.

jail sentence and her domineering fence/boyfriend Maurice (Gerard Oury), Leon decides to impress her by becoming the "Peek-A-Boo" bandit. Now the most infamous (but honorable) thief in France, Leon allows himself to be arrested, so that the object of his affection will know that he is every bit the man of adventure and intrigue that she desires.

The producers of this bizarre French comedy aimed for the international market by having the cast speak their lines in English. Therein lies the problem with this United Artists release: the verbal humor in director Jean Boyer and Michael Audirad's script (adapted from Marcel Aymes' novel *THE MAN WHO COULD WALK THROUGH WALLS*) has been somewhat neutered in translation. Exchanges that were meant to be witty usually just seem curious, as does the spectacle of the cast trying not to sound French in a movie set in France! However, the leads are winning and there are belly

laughs to be had from the way Leon torments the poor prison warden with his constant strolls "outside." The effects are basic, with pronounced matte lines, but certainly adequate for a project that was meant to be sold primarily as a romantic comedy.

The B&W materials feature light but consistent wear that becomes more pronounced during reel changes. The audio is comparatively fresh and the dialogue is coherent. Like many Englewood releases, the credits are presented as a series of video still frames and the tape concludes with the usual miniaturized trailers. The box reports an inflated running time of 90m. While it may just be a problem affecting our review copy, the master for this title contains a great deal of damage. There is also a strange edit (approximately 20m in) that drops dialogue and does not appear to have been caused by a break in the print. Onscreen title: **MR. PEEK-A-BOO**. —John Charles

THE PEEPING

Tau kwai mo jeu (Cantonese)

Tou kui wu zui (Mandarin)

"Watching Is Not a Crime"

2002, Tai Seng Video Marketing,

HF/LB, \$9.95, VHS

DD-5.1/MA/LB/ST/+, \$14.95,

DVD-0, 88m 33s

The real-life sex scandal involving Taiwanese politician Melody Chu Mei-feng (whose sexual encounter with a married man was secretly taped and then widely circulated on VCD, leading to her resignation) was a natural for HK exploitation cinema, and this Film Power production hit theaters only a few months later. A specialist in divorce cases, private eye Calvin (**COP ON A MISSION**'s Daniel Wu Yan-zu) is offered HK\$1,000,000 by the beautiful, enigmatic Siu-wong (**PR GIRLS**' Grace Lam Nga-sze) to undertake an investigation in Taiwan. The target is comely, bisexual legislative councillor Kwai Fung-ming (**STREET OF FURY**'s Teresa Mak Kar-kei), who enjoys an affluent life filled with decadent parties. Siu-wong brings Calvin to one of these drink-and-drug-fuelled soirées, giving him the chance to conceal tiny video cameras throughout Fung-ming's home. Later that evening, he gets footage of his client and Fung-ming making love. The former is satisfied with the footage but orders him to continue shooting for another two weeks. In time, Calvin finds himself becoming protective of Fung-ming, and his girlfriend, Cindy (Jenny Yam Kong-sau), begins to question his fidelity. Naturally, Calvin eventually breaks his professional code of ethics by becoming involved with Fung-ming himself, leading to predictable complications.

The producers of **THE PEEPING** were apparently aiming for the IIB rating (equivalent to PG-13), as their picture tries to be coy and salacious at the same time, but



In-fighting among Taiwanese politicians leads to deception and blackmail in the HK sex thriller THE PEEPING.

HK censors awarded it the adults-only Category III classification anyway. The result is one of oddest HK sex movies ever released. No matter how prurient the sequence and no matter how much flesh is exposed, nothing is really ever shown, save for a bunch of bare behinds. Aside from two amusingly campy zoom shots used to punctuate some absurd dialogue, director Marco Mak Chi-sin (**THE BLOOD RULES**) seems intrigued only by the challenge of finding ways to conceal the actresses' "naughty bits." While points for innovation are certainly warranted here (the myriad methods utilized to hide nipples generate far more suspense than the dramatic conflicts!), the target audience will likely feel that he did all-too-good of a job. Every other aspect of the film is routine and the screenplay by the infamous "Not a Woman" (a pseudonym that has popped up on a number of productions) incorporates all of the expected clichés. The performances also are not particularly inspired; it does not help that Teresa Mak and Grace

Lam had to be dubbed by other actresses owing to their lack of fluency in Mandarin, and the inexpressive Daniel Wu does not make a very credible protagonist. In what is easily the production's masterstroke of creativity, prolific cinematic deviant Samuel Leung Cheuk-moon (**NAKED POISON, CRIME OF A BEAST**) co-stars... as a normal, even honorable guy!

Although Tai Seng's packaging screams "Totally and Absolutely UNCUT!" their version is no different from the one released in HK by Universe. The image is soft and overly dark at times, with middling contrasts. The Cantonese version (included on the VHS release) is a mix of live and dubbed audio, while the Mandarin version sticks with that language throughout; both mixes are subdued and predominantly monophonic in nature. Tai Seng's yellow subtitles (optional on the DVD) offer an improved translation over the Universe edition, though the font is a bit large. Supplementary material consists of an inconsequential alternate opening credit

sequence (5m 59s) and a video promo spot for **COP ON A MISSION**. —John Charles

ROOM OF CHAINS

1972, *Something Weird Video*, +, \$20.00 ppd, 68m 48s, VHS

Claiming to be based on real events "taken from the composite files of the French police," this R-rated adult curiosity—which really hails from France—plays like a sober and artistic European answer to John Maddox's infamous roughie **SCARE THEIR PANTS OFF!** [reviewed VW 82:60]. Respected antiques dealer George is carrying on a secret affair with gay employee Marc, but the former's wife would probably be more disturbed to learn about the weird ceremonies the two lovers conduct in a dungeon-like cellar. A third man (whose secret identity is completely obvious to the viewer) is employed to kidnap young girls, who are stripped, chained up, and subjected to various tortures, as classical music emanates from a reel-to-reel tape

deck. The victims are released once George and Marc (who wear religious robes and observe the proceedings throughout a peephole) have reached a state where they are "untroubled and calm." While fantasizing about using a snake on one victim, George inadvertently runs a young couple off the road. Believing the man to be unconscious, he puts the girl in his car and makes her the next unwilling participant in the strange rituals; however, her paramour is soon on the trail, with a suspicious police inspector not far behind.

In contrast to the Maddox film, the men here derive pleasure from the women's humiliation but never actually have sex with them, making the proceedings seem oddly chaste, considering the premise and abundant full frontal female nudity. Director Gerard Trembasiewicz creates an effectively languid, dreamy atmosphere through color gel lighting and the aforementioned music, but the remainder of the picture is yawn-inducingly uneventful and the storyline borders on nonsensical (though nothing seems to be missing from this version). There is also some *de rigueur* humor that now seems almost as politically incorrect as George and Marc's depraved antics. When one victim (who seems ready and willing to shed her top in front of anyone) tells police that she was kidnapped, stripped, and lashed all over, one unimpressed officer replies, "Is that all?" We are unable to provide the real names of the actors, but Jack Bernard, Evelyn Kerr, and Oliver Neal are the lead players listed in the partially Anglicized credits.

THE ROOM OF CHAINS (on-screen title) was released stateside by Group 1 and SWV's well-travelled 35mm source print has plenty of scratches and constant speckling. Colors are fairly vibrant in the mildly cropped transfer, but



Unsuspecting hitchhikers find themselves confined in ROOM OF CHAINS, a bizarre French sexploitation thriller.

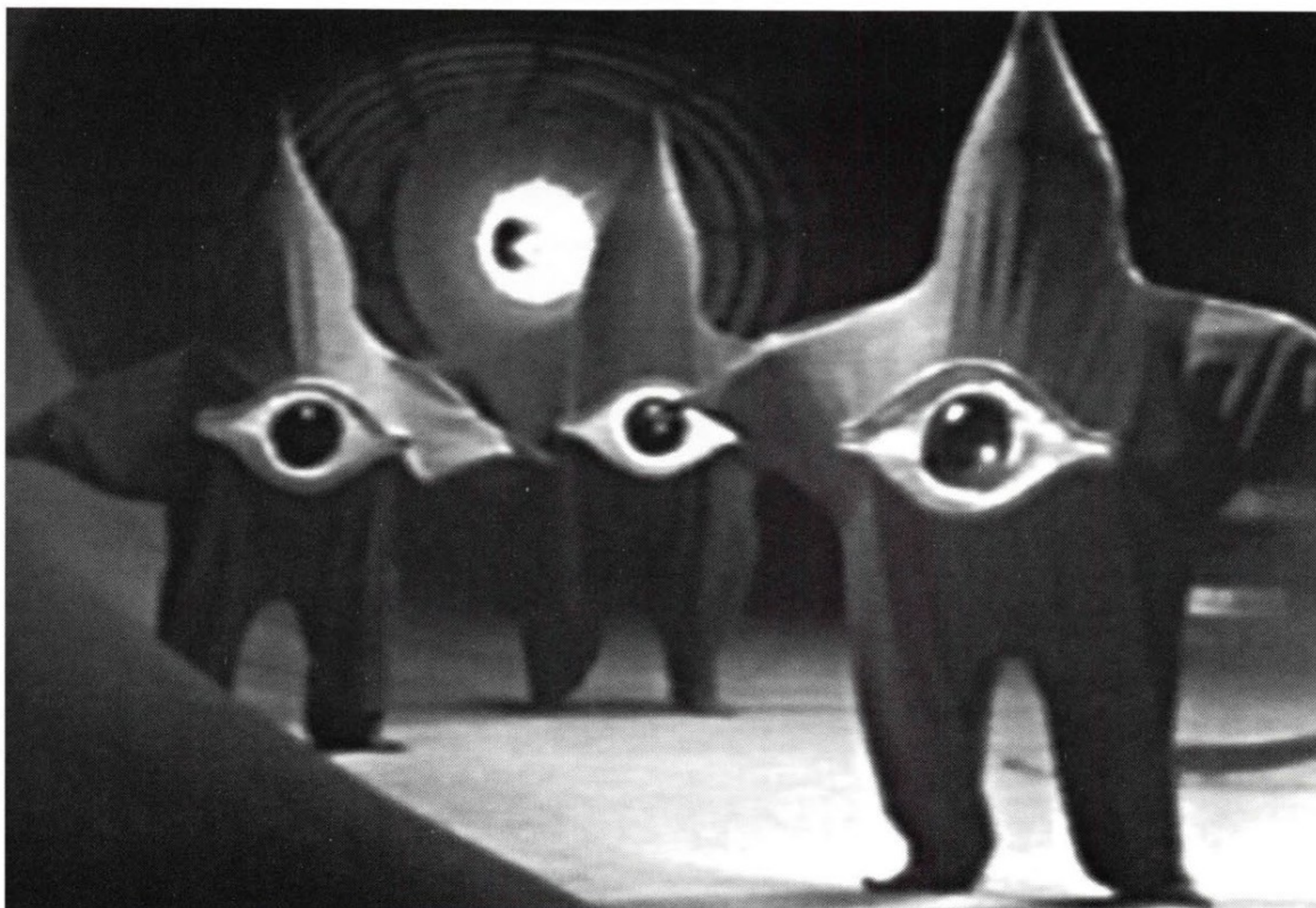
sequences bathed in what we assume was originally red now look pink, and day-for-night shots are overly bright. The sound is hissy but not bad, considering the hundreds of passes to which the optical track has been subjected. The SWV bug does not make an appearance and, following the feature is a generous collection of softcore trailers and a pair of psychedelic shorts. —John Charles

WARNING FROM SPACE

Uchujin Tokyo ni arawaru
 "Space Men Appear In Tokyo"
 aka **THE MYSTERIOUS SATELLITE**
 1956, *Something Weird Video*,
 HF, \$20.00 ppd, 80m 57s, VHS

The first color science fiction movie shot in Japan, this Daiei production from director Kôji Shima owes a debt to **WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE** and **THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL** but is generally more in keeping with other Japanese genre productions of its period. One evening, scientist Toru (Keizo Kawasaki) observes a flying saucer through his observatory's telescope and, later

on, the same ship is seen falling into Tokyo Bay. Beings from Planet Paira have arrived on Earth and their strange appearance (floppy man-sized starfish with a single Daliesque glowing eye) horrifies the humans who encounter them. Desperately seeking to make contact, one of the Pairans transforms into an exact duplicate of a popular female singer! While their motives appear sinister, the creatures have actually come to warn us of an impending disaster: a runaway orb that the Pairans call "Planet R" is on a collision course with Earth. The aliens state that all of our hydrogen and atomic bombs will be required to obliterate Planet R or, at least, alter its course. If the various world governments are not convinced of the threat and refuse to share their weapons, both Earth and Paira will perish in the ensuing holocaust. Dr. Matsuda (Isao Yamagata) has discovered an extremely powerful explosive formula that may prove essential in achieving success, but foreign agents kidnap him just as the approaching planet creates



*The Daliesque Pairens featured in Daiei's **WARNING FROM SPACE**, the first Japanese sci-fi movie produced in color.*

deadly heat waves and tidal waves on Earth.

Dialogue-heavy and featuring fewer special effects than would be the norm in later Japanese science fiction films, **WARNING FROM SPACE** still has its points of interest. The premise echoes that of **GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS** [*Gojira*, 1954] by painting the atomic build-up as a countdown to Armageddon; however, it ultimately deviates somewhat from this stance by having Matsuda's new super explosive be the only effective defense against Planet R. In addition to their advanced science and shape-shifting abilities, the Pairans display their superiority in another important way by tricking the Earthlings into using up their atomic stockpile in what the aliens almost certainly knew would be a futile effort—but the screenplay never spells out why the visitors would risk their own

destruction at the same time. The Pairans eradicated violence on their world and have come to their counterparts on the other side of the sun for aid in eradicating the menace; however, the female Pairan agent admonishes Matsuda midway through the picture for his invention, which her people realized eons ago would be the harbinger of their doom. Why would everything come down to the wire, with a quest to find the kidnapped doctor, when the aliens could have produced the explosive (or one similar) and used it on their own? The silly-looking starfish (which look like people trapped inside giant pillows) are often held up to critical ridicule, but this is actually an accomplished production, with the sterile metallic interior of the Pairans' ship a particularly striking bit of set design.

WARNING FROM SPACE was released theatrically in England

in 1957, with a running time of 88m. It was handled stateside by American International Pictures, who had the movie trimmed by approximately 8m (possibly explaining the inconsistency mentioned above) and redubbed by Titra before dumping it in one of their AIP-TV packages. As it was derived from an old pre-scanned (and somewhat worn) 16mm TV print, one can't expect this Something Weird VHS release to be a definitive presentation, but it's quite reasonable considering what they had to work with. The transfer is soft but offers fairly robust colors. During the climactic heatwave, the image is more of a pinkish brown than the stark red or orange that one presumes was originally featured. The pan&scan reformatting is not too distracting but the audio is quite noisy, particularly in the first half. —John Charles





The Film Bulletin Reviews, 1969-1974

©02 PETE FITZGERALD

THE CAREY TREATMENT

Thinly plotted, weakly-motivated hospital whodunit should perform fairishly in general situations where Coburn name and snappy pace will get it by. Lacks motivation to satisfy more discriminating viewers. Rating: PG.

THE CAREY TREATMENT is the final outcome of the reported production dispute between director Blake Edwards and MGM, wherein Edwards filed suit charging president James T. Aubrey, Jr. with breach of contract for, among other things, shortening the location shooting schedule and setting too early a release date. Nevertheless, Edwards remains credited as director. As it stands, the film is a poorly motivated hospital mystery potboiler, a casually senseless affair whose aimless plotting will get by in mass markets on the basis of the teaming of James Coburn and Jennifer O'Neill, a brisk pace and attractive location photography. Whether its weaknesses are due to "the Aubrey Treatment" is open to question. Prospects in better class markets are so-so at best, since little suspense or intelligent drama is developed. Directing with his usual smoothness, Edwards builds some likeable characters of the sort that could stay with a viewer, but the events that befall them in **THE CAREY TREATMENT** often border on the preposterous. Coburn is a hip West Coast pathologist newly arrived at a Boston hospital where fellow doctor James Hong has been arrested in the abortion-death of the daughter of snobby hospital head Dan O'Herlihy. Coburn conducts his own investigation, while

his carryings-on with dietician Miss O'Neal eat up the rest of his time. He doesn't get much doctoring into his schedule. James P. Bonnet's episodic screenplay, based on "A Case of Need" by Jeffrey Hudson (Michael Crichton), seems structured solely to provide bravura cameos for the supporting cast. Indeed, the film's few strong points include some nifty performances in brief roles by Pat Hingle as a complacent detective, Elizabeth Allen as O'Herlihy's sodden wife, Alex Dreier as a gourmet abortionist, Skye Aubrey as an implicated nurse, and Jennifer Edwards as the dead girl's weirdo roommate. Miss O'Neill gives a warmly appealing performance, but her character has absolutely nothing to do with the story, and she keeps referring to a little son who is never seen as she dallies day and night with Coburn. Other loopholes and absurdities abound. An assailant thrown down a stairwell by Coburn suffers only a bloody nose, while the indestructible hero himself continues to function efficiently even after phoning from a booth which is smashed to smithereens by a speeding car. Coburn's "treatment" consists of roughing up and browbeating various suspicious types into identifying the abortionist. The latter portions, meanwhile, are devoted to the homicidal exploits of mad *masseur* Michael Blodgett, whose enmity Coburn has encouraged, as he hacks his way through a hospital ward.

1972. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Panavision, Metrocolor. 100 minutes. James Coburn, Jennifer O'Neill, Dan O'Herlihy, Pat Hingle. Produced by William Belasco. Directed by Blake Edwards.

THE CAREY TREATMENT—which was released in Australia as **A CASE OF MURDER**, and is also known elsewhere as **EMERGENCY WARD**—has never received a North American video release.

DUCK! YOU SUCKER

Rambling, disjointed Mexican revolutionary comedy by Sergio Leone is something of a disappointment. Coburn, Steiger names will help early going, but that terrible title will hurt it even in action mills. Rating: PG.

Sergio Leone's latest continental Western, set in Mexico and unappetizingly titled **DUCK! YOU SUCKER**, is a small scale adventure yarn with comic overtones, produced in a big-scale way that dwarfs the plot. It's been on the United Artists shelf since last summer, during which time its length has been whittled away from nearly three hours to a very disjointed 138 minutes. The pacing is wobbly and uneven; some sequences play nicely while others just sit there, and the continuity suffers from the same confusing gaps that ruined the cut version of Leone's last (and best) picture, **ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST**. The marquee value of Rod Steiger and James Coburn may lure some opening trade, but what patronage the terrible title doesn't keep away, word-of-mouth will. Even in the action mills, where Leone's reputation as maker of the highly successful "Dollars" Westerns might have drummed up business, the title will be a hindrance. **SUCKER**, which is doing well overseas, has only slight narrative drive and even less of the distinctive Leone fair, at least in this truncated version. The diffuse screenplay by Leone, Sergio Donati and Luciano Vincenzoni is a rambling, episodic affair, with the accent on broad comic playing, which Steiger, unfortunately, is not up to. He plays a Mexican peon-turned-bandit whose swarm of sons of all ages serve as his gang, and although the character is good for some laughs, Steiger's hammy portrayal often stops them dead in their tracks. Coburn fares much better, his breezy style perfectly suited to an off-beat and interesting role as an Irish revolutionary and explosives expert (the title derives from his shouted warning whenever he heaves a stick of dynamite). Coburn and Steiger team up to break into the Mesa Verde bank, which to Steiger's dismay is filled

not with gold but with political prisoners, who happily regard the reluctant Steiger as their liberator and a revolutionary hero. He eventually joins Coburn in battling the Mexican army (and German tanks), but the major turning point in Steiger's attitude—the government's massacre of his family—has been deleted, and the second half of the film seems so compressed, it doesn't make much sense. A subplot concerns a revolutionary doctor (Romolo Valli) who turns out to be a traitor, triggering Coburn flashbacks to his IRA days when he shot his best friend for selling out the cause. The action and fireworks are neatly staged, but the bulk of the film seems not so much spectacular as simply overproduced. While Leone's earlier films extracted mythic, larger than life drama from opulent, careful production, here the bigness merely gets in the way. The Spanish locations are rather colorless and Giuseppe Ruzzolini's cinematography never approaches the knockout quality of the previous pictures. Ennio Morricone's subdued score is quite nice.

Giù la testa. 1971. United Artists (A Rafran Film). Technicolor. Techniscope. 138 minutes. Rod Steiger, James Coburn, Romolo Valli. Produced by Fulvio Morsella. Directed by Sergio Leone.

MGM Home Entertainment has since changed "that terrible title" to **A FISTFUL OF DYNAMITE**, and the film is currently available on VHS (pan&scanned and reportedly only 138m, so who cares?), priced at \$14.98. Some years ago, Image Entertainment released a superb two-disc laserdisc edition, which was fully letterboxed and unveiled—for the first time in America—Leone's original 154m cut, which carried an R rating for strong language, graphic violence, and a brief instance of frontal male nudity. While still not one of Leone's best films, **A FISTFUL OF DYNAMITE** is a rewarding experience when seen in this version and is aching for a DVD revival.



The lining of James Coburn's jacket will blow your mind in Sergio Leone's A FISTFUL OF DYNAMITE.



*Sheriff Pat Garrett (James Coburn) enlists the help of John Poe (John Beck) to bring back an infamous outlaw, dead or alive, in Sam Peckinpah's **PAT GARRETT AND BILLY THE KID**.*

PAT GARRETT AND BILLY THE KID

Post-production tampering mitigates against this Western by Sam Peckinpah finding its deserved reception from better-class audiences. Shortened release version is vague, confusing, and is being sold as routine action entry in saturation breaks where it should perform routinely, no more. Kris Kristofferson and acting debut of Bob Dylan provide youth lures. Rating: R.

"It feels like times have changed," says Pat Garrett. "Times, maybe—not me," says Billy the Kid. A classical Sam Peckinpah exchange, reflecting one of the numerous obsessive themes that run through his latest Western. But times certainly haven't changed for Peckinpah—for, despite the overdue success of his last venture, **THE GET-AWAY**, the embattled and iconoclastic director who revolutionized the Western with **THE WILD BUNCH** has run afoul of the same problem that plagued several of his previous efforts. Enough footage has been hastily edited out of **PAT GARRETT AND BILLY THE KID** to transform what seems to have had the makings of a first-rate film into a confusing, skeletal jumble of indifferent boxoffice value.

It boasts intriguing marquee factors in James Coburn, rock star Kris Kristofferson and, in his movie debut, pop culture mystery idol Bob Dylan. But MGM has obviously elected to bypass discriminating audiences and aim strictly for the routine action trade via saturation bookings; the cutting (a reported three reels) was obviously executed with that audience in mind. In its present form, **PAT GARRETT** will probably satisfy no one. The tone is still far too measured and elegiac for the action crowd, while discerning viewers will find the story values in this truncated version seriously impaired. Peckinpah and writer Rudy Wurlitzer seem to have created a distinctive Western with elements of greatness, one which might well have performed impressively in better-class markets, had it not been truncated to fit double-bill playing time. The New Mexican political background, important to the story, is very muddled, as are the character relations. Indeed, the central relationship between Coburn (Garrett) and Kristofferson (Billy), former friends turned deadly adversaries, comes through with far less impact than it should. The heart of the conflict is missing, leaving an uneven succession of often strikingly beautiful sequences clustered around a vague plot that plays slowly because so much of it is unexplained. Dialogue has obviously been deleted from the midst

of conversations and at least one death scene entirely re-dubbed with a voice that does not match the actor's.

The strong supporting cast features more leathery oldtimers than even A.C. Lyles could corral into one picture, but most are limited to two scenes each—the one in which they're introduced, and the one in which they're killed. Even so, there are some moving moments, notably from Jack Elam and Slim Pickens as luckless lawmen recruited by Coburn to help capture Kristofferson. The latter, a living legend of romantic lawlessness, has become an embarrassment to New Mexican officials, including governor Jason Robards. Coburn, father figure and former crony of Kristofferson who has since hired himself out to hated land-grabbing interests, brings the outlaw in, but he escapes, killing deputies R.C. Armstrong and Matt Clark. Coburn goes after him, enlisting various old friends to help, most of whom are killed in encounters with Kristofferson's gang. Finally, Coburn closes in on Kristofferson while he's making love to girlfriend Rita Coolidge. Coburn waits on a porch swing for the lovers to finish before shooting Kristofferson, and rides away a pariah for having destroyed the legend.

Coburn is superb as the archetypical Peckinpah hero—world-weary, disillusioned and compromised. Kristofferson is well-cast and only newcomer Dylan, in a minor role that looks hyped up in the editing, betrays his discomfort with the new medium. Sharply-etched vignettes are provided by Chill Wills, Katy Jurado, L.Q. Jones, Gene Evans, Richard Jaeckel, Emilio Fernandez, Paul Fix and Peckinpah himself. Barry Sullivan (still billed in the TV spots), Elisha Cook and Dub Taylor didn't make it into the final print. John Coquillon's cinematography is very fine, but Dylan's score (a selling point—though there is, amazingly, no soundtrack album) would have been more effective without the vocals.

1973. MGM. Metrocolor, Panavision. 106 minutes. James Coburn, Kris Kristofferson, Bob Dylan. Produced by Gordon Carroll. Directed by Sam Peckinpah.

In 1989, MGM released **PAT GARRETT AND BILLY THE KID** on VHS in an expanded 122m "director's cut" version that played much more smoothly, though its pan&scan transfer was a continuing mockery of the original widescreen cinematography. In 1991, MGM issued a widescreen laserdisc edition that will remain, until its re-emergence on DVD, a collector's item. It included a trailer that contained scenes still missing from the picture. A soundtrack album of Bob Dylan's score—featuring the now-classic song "Knockin' On Heaven's Door"—was released by Columbia, shortly after the publication of Joe's review—and is still available today, on CD.

STRAW DOGS

Dustin Hoffman defends his home against murderous thugs in strong, violent melodrama with appeal to both discriminating trades and the blood-and-guts fans. Rating: R.

Director Sam Peckinpah's fascination with violence as man's most basic instinct finds new and disturbing expression in **STRAW DOGS**, a difficult, harrowing film which is in essence a long, slow-burning fuse leading to an explosion of bloodshed. On the whole, the ABC Pictures Corp. production possesses a nightmare intensity few horror films could match, and this should be a factor in drawing both serious filmgoers and the mayhem-minded masses. As an action entry, the Cinerama release has the requisite sex and brutality to pull them in, while Dustin Hoffman's presence in the lead assures the interest if not the wholehearted enthusiasm of the general market trades, who may be put off by the unsympathetic, even cowardly nature of his role. Gordon Williams' novel *THE SIEGE OF TRENCHER'S FARM* has been heavily re-structured by Peckinpah and writer David Z. Goodman to provide a vehicle for Peckinpah's primal thesis. His direction is forceful, assured and unwavering in its emphasis on the more alarming aspects of human behavior.

Hoffman is a meek American mathematician who moves with sprightly English wife Susan George to her isolated farm on the Cornish seacoast, where life will hopefully be less demanding and the marriage will go a bit smoother. Hard-drinking local rubes who covet the sexy Miss George think Hoffman a despicable weakling and treat him accordingly. Incredible tension develops as their demeanor becomes more and more threatening. The couple find their cat strangled, hanging in a closet, but Hoffman does nothing. The locals entice him out hunting, and steal back to rape his wife while he's gone. Though humiliated, Hoffman still takes no action. After village idiot David Warner (unbilled) accidentally strangles a flirtatious teenager, he runs into Hoffman's car and is taken to the house. The girl's hulking, murderous father (Peter Vaughan) leads a drunken crowd trying to wrest Warner from the house and kill him. Only then does Hoffman assert himself, declaring "I will not allow violence against my house." During the pitched battle that follows, a couple of people are shotgunned, one is beaten with a poker, another's foot is shot off, and one more is dispatched in the giant jaws of an antique trap. In the end, Hoffman is transformed into a killer fully as bestial as his attackers, and enjoys it. Such, says

Peckinpah, is the way of man. The point is blunted, however, by the effect of the "siege" itself, which though not without some inherent shock value, is simply not, in fact, violent enough to provide the catharsis the film has so carefully built toward (much of this may be due to the domestic cutting imposed to avoid an X rating). The result is a nasty and rather unsatisfying experience. Hoffman evolves from whining egghead to mass murderer, leaving the film without a hero, but the performances are otherwise good. Johnny Coquillon's location photography and Jerry Fielding's music are top-notch.

1971. Cinerama Releasing (ABC Pictures Corp.—Talent Associates). Eastman Color. 112 minutes. Dustin Hoffman, Susan George, Peter Vaughan. Produced by Daniel Melnick. Directed by Sam Peckinpah.

STRAW DOGS was available domestically on DVD from Anchor Bay Entertainment, though the contents of their disc fell considerably short of the earlier Image Entertainment laserdisc release (which included an isolated music track of Jerry Fielding's score) and the extras-laden DVD recently issued in the United Kingdom [see VW 91:5]. MGM has acquired the US video rights and will no doubt issue a new DVD edition in the near future.

THE WILD BUNCH

A Western classic that reveals, with staggering impact, the real meaning of violence. Surefire attraction for action fans, while controversy over film's purpose and importance will lure thinking audience. Rating: R.

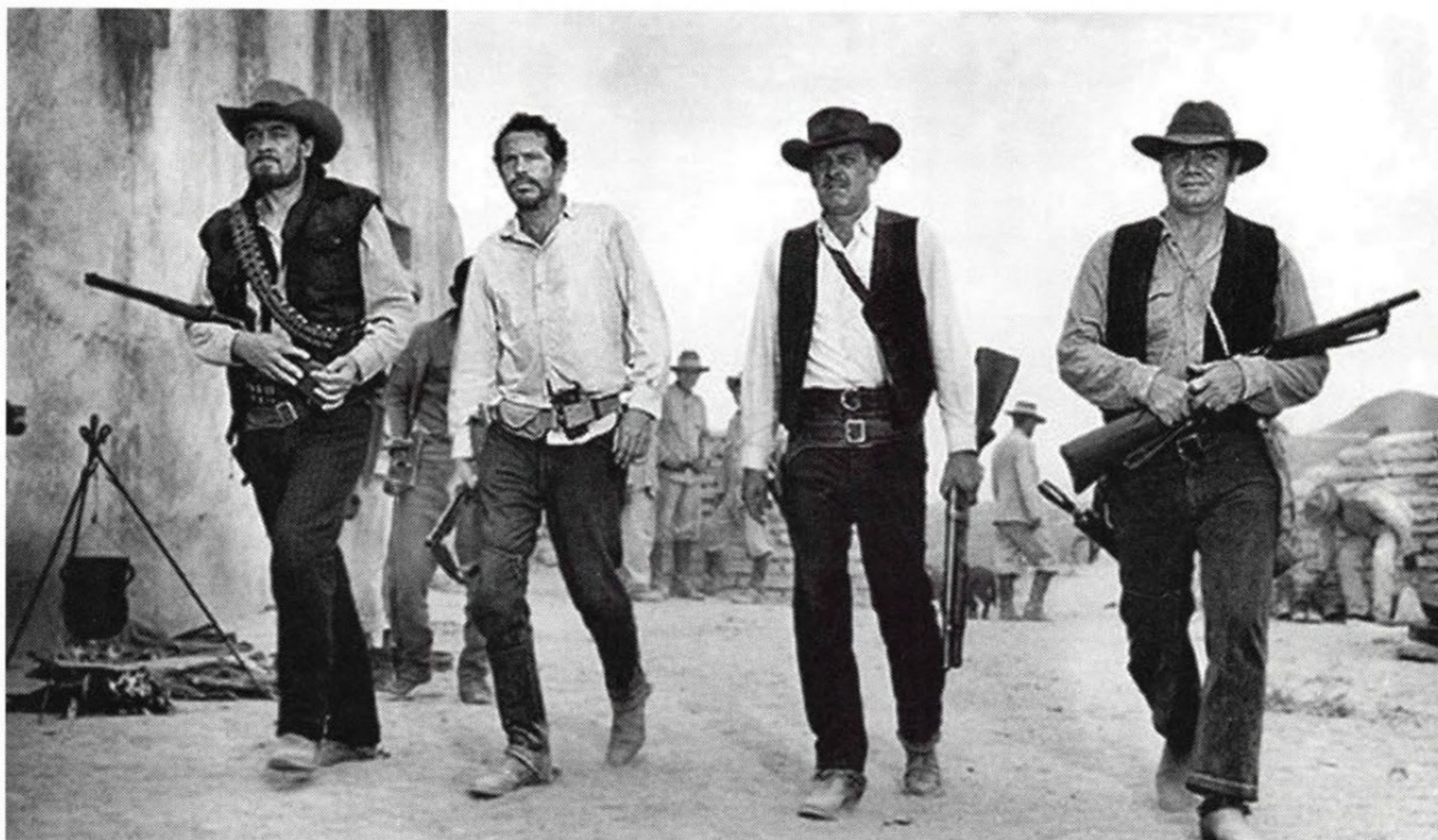
THE WILD BUNCH is probably the most important American Western since **THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY** (1903), and one which is likely to grow into a huge popular success, perhaps for the wrong reasons. Redefining traditional Western mythology in the harsh light of contemporary reality, it finalizes a transitional period in the evolution of the species. The Phil Feldman production's controversial emphasis on sheer violence should be enough to lure the action trade in large number, and that alone guarantees a certain degree of boxoffice success. But the picture's real merit lies in what it has to offer the thinking patron in terms of insight into what the Western form, and, indirectly, the American experience, is all about. This factor is bound to induce much critical comment and public discussion, prompting wide interest among discriminating filmgoers, including the important college-age audience.

Grown out of a unique national experience, the Western has been America's most popular and original contribution to world fiction, and has formed the basis of a staggering number of

motion pictures, all celebrating the myth of the inevitable triumph of justice over evil. The filmic Western's depiction of violence, with bloodless wounds and nearly painless death, as mere "action" has come to obscure its inherent viciousness. In **THE WILD BUNCH**, director Sam Peckinpah reveals, with intense impact and disturbing fascination, the flow of blood and the pain of death.

The Wild Bunch is a murderous outlaw gang led by aging gunman Pike Bishop (William Holden), operating near the Mexican border in 1913, at the bitter end of the frontier era. Singleminded in its cold-blooded reliance on brutality as a way of life, the gang are utterly devoid of humane qualities, unmindful of the death and suffering they cause, going through the motions as if by rote, primarily because they don't know how to do anything else. Time has passed them by, and they are doomed to live out their lives in an atmosphere of futility and defeat. Under threat of being returned to prison, ex-gang member Deke Thornton (Robert Ryan) is forced by the railroad company to lead a motley group of bounty hunters in pursuit of the gang. In the opening scenes, Thornton's rooftop gunmen decimate a townful of innocent bystanders in a crossfire while attempting unsuccessfully to stop The Wild Bunch from robbing the town station office. The shattering, gruesomely detailed horror of the sequence is heightened by a brilliant displacement of time through the use of crosscutting between regular-speed and slowmotion views of death. As flesh and blood explode under the impact of shotgun blasts, an overpowering sense of honesty takes precedence even over the chilling poetry of death, marking **THE WILD BUNCH** as perhaps the most truthful Western ever made.

Previously only Italy's Sergio Leone, viewing the Western from a posture divorced from national historical considerations, managed to distill its two essential ingredients: Violence and Confrontation. Presenting abundant mayhem in a stylized, somewhat cynical manner, the best of the Leone films built up elaborate, ritualized scenes of classic confrontations between characters of varying amorality. Peckinpah goes the necessary step further. His characters range from "corrupt" to "unspeakable," not merely "anti-heroes," but very nearly "anti-human." By removing the expected confrontation (between Pike and Thornton) from his story, he forces the audience into a confrontation of its own—bringing the viewer face-to-face with the naked violence which has always been a vital part of America,



Ben Johnson, Warren Oates, William Holden and Ernest Borgnine star in the classic Western that kicks like a horse: THE WILD BUNCH.

and which has always been sublimated in the glamorized confections of Hollywood.

In collaboration with co-authors Walon Green and Roy N. Sickner, the director also works an illuminating variation on a staple aspect of other exceptional Westerns, children's imitative glamorization of gunplay—such sequences having appeared in **SHANE**, **HIGH NOON**, **FOR A FEW DOLLARS MORE** and many others. Peckinpah's use of children to the same end is extraordinary, beyond the first unsubtle glimpse of children gleefully watching a scorpion being eaten alive by red ants. In a number of telling shots, he shows their worship of the uniform, fascination with the mechanics of death, imitation of the gunmen; their awe tinged with fear during the carnage, and finally—in a masterful climactic stroke—Pike being shot in the back by a child.

The bulk of the plot is taken up with the gang's efforts to hijack a munitions train from the US Army for Mexican bandit general Mapache (Emilio Fernandez), pursued all the while by Thornton and his men. During a final celebration, Mapache has a Mexican rebel gang member (Jaime Fernandez) put to death, and The Wild Bunch is goaded into a last, blood-drenched battle with the Mexicans which culminates in the slaughter of the entire gang.

The acting and technicalities are first-rate throughout. Holden has his first worthwhile role

in years, and makes the most of it. Ryan is memorable, as always, as the degraded hunter who all too obviously would rather be riding with the gang once more. As a broken-down old gunslinger, Edmond O'Brien is superb, though almost unrecognizable; a sort of degenerate Gabby Hayes. Ernest Borgnine, Warren Oates, Ben Johnson and Sanchez are never less than convincing as members of the gang. Fernandez, Strother Martin, Chano Urueta and the late Albert Dekker are outstanding in supporting roles. Lucien Ballard's dazzling photography is alternately dreamlike and nightmarishly real. Louis Lombardo's editing is artful, although the ending is overextended and a number of flashbacks are rather clumsily introduced.

With **THE WILD BUNCH**, Sam Peckinpah joins the ranks of America's major directors. He has—finally—held up a mirror to show us what we have really been watching for all these years. It is not a pretty sight, and many people will self-deceptively turn away and reject it. But its virtue is truth, and its implications inescapable.

1969. Warner Bros. Seven Arts. Technicolor, Panavision. 142 minutes. William Holden, Ernest Borgnine, Robert Ryan, Edmond O'Brien, Warren Oates. Produced by Phil Feldman. Directed by Sam Peckinpah.

A "restored director's cut" of **THE WILD BUNCH**, which runs 145m, is currently available as a widescreen DVD from Warner Home Video (\$19.98).



The Ring Cycle

A black and white photograph of a woman holding a glowing orb, with a man's face visible in the background. The woman is in the foreground, looking down at the orb with a somber expression. The man's face is in the background, looking towards the camera with a distressed expression. The orb is a bright, glowing sphere held in the woman's hands.

A Gaze into the Wellspring
of New Japanese Horror

By Richard Harland Smith



ne would have to live at the bottom of a well to have missed the buzz on Hideo Nakata's **RING**, flagship of the armada of "J-horror" steaming out of Japan since the mid-1990s. This \$1.2 million sleeper—based on Kôji Suzuki's 1991 novel *RINGU*, about a cursed videotape visiting death upon anyone who watches it—was an unexpected success in Japan and in Hong Kong, where its influence was felt in such knock-offs as **A WICKED GHOST** and **SLEEPING WITH THE DEAD**, as well as in the more serious-minded **THE EYE** and **INNER SENSES**.

The **RING** phenomenon began in 1995, with the Fuji Television movie **Ringu Kanzen-ban** ("Ring: The Complete Edition"), the very first adaptation of Suzuki's novel. It went on to inspire two additional miniseries and a radio drama, while Nakata's film resulted in various sequels, a prequel, and Kim Dong-bin's Korean remake **THE RING VIRUS**. Remarkably, even before it was shown in America, **RING** probably qualified as the most quickly, frequently, and profitably remade film in history.

In 2000, the contagion went global. **RING** was screened at the 54th Edinburgh International Film Festival, along with Jôji Iida's studio-mandated sequel **SPIRAL**—which was based on the second volume of Suzuki's *RINGU* trilogy, and unusually, filmed and released in Japan simultaneously with **RING**. While **SPIRAL** was dismissed as a ponderous dud, **RING** terrified its festival audience and caught fire on bootleg video, a medium uniquely suited to conveying its forbidden terrors. In 2001, England's Tartan Video released both **RING** and its second sequel, **RING 2** (which asks, à la **THE EXORCIST III**, that the previous sequel be forgotten) as widescreen, subtitled PAL DVDs. They were followed, more recently, by Tartan's disc of **RING 0**, a prequel directed by Norio Tsuruta.

The success of DreamWorks' American remake **THE RING** (2002), both domestically and in Japan, makes this a suitable occasion to roll back tape on the **RING** phenomenon to see what all the screaming is about.

Nanako Matsushima and Hiroyuki Sanada peer into the secret responsible for many deaths in the original RING.

RING

Ringu

1998, Tartan Video, #TVD 3320,
DD-2.0/16:9/LB/ST/+, £19.99, 91m 1s, DVD-0, PAL

Reminiscent of Toshiharu Ikeda's **EVIL DEAD TRAP** [*Shiryo no wana*, 1988], which also made its belated DVD debut [reviewed VW 72:57] after years on the gray market, **RING** begins with the investigation of TV reporter Reiko Asakawa (Nanako Matsushima) into the deaths of several area teens, one of them her niece Tomoko (Yûko Takeuchi). Interviewing the victims' classmates, Reiko learns that they watched a video while on holiday in Izu, a tape featuring "this scary woman" who tells viewers they have one week to live, a fact promptly confirmed by the ringing of their telephone. Traveling to the lodge where the teens spent the night, Reiko views a grainy video montage of seemingly unrelated images: an angle of the night sky, a woman combing her hair before an oval mirror, floating newsprint, people writhing on a mountainside, a hooded figure, and finally an old well—and her phone rings. Fearing she may now bear the curse ("A week!"), Reiko seeks out ex-husband Ryûji (**MESSAGE FROM SPACE**'s Hiroyuki Sanada), a mathematician with psychic sensitivity. Research reveals that the tape bears images of a provincial psychic, Shizuko Yamamura (Masako), who committed suicide 40 years earlier. When their young son Yoichi is exposed to the cursed video, Reiko and Ryûji travel to Oshima Island, where they learn that Shizuko had a daughter, Sadako—"a monster" able to kill by force of will. With only one day left, Reiko and Ryûji race back to Izu to locate Sadako, alive or dead, in order to save themselves and their family from imminent destruction.

RING's international success is due in part to the global resonance of its narrative and visual tropes, which extend to literature, cinema, fine art, modern photography and history. The central conceit of violation and retribution recalls the premature entombments of Edgar Allan Poe, the time sensitive terrors of M.R. James and the avenging apparitions of Lafcadio Hearn and Wilkie Collins—as well as any film that ever employed for suspense purposes a spectral child, a TV set

or a hole dug deep into the earth. The stretched physiognomy of the vengeful Sadako mirrors Edvard Munch's "The Shriek" and the gauzy, attenuated brides of Marc Chagall (painted by the artist in response to his wife's early death) as much as it reflects the vast ghost genre of Japanese art. **RING**'s use of distorted snapshots as harbingers of death (ie., once Sadako's curse is upon someone, they cannot be clearly photographed) recalls the grotesque exposures of Kentucky-based neo-Surrealist Ralph Eugene Meatyard, and the shrouded figure seen on Sadako's cursed video brings to mind the mass suicides of the Heaven's Gate cultists in 1997. Apart from these cultural touchstones, **RING** is a return to the classic form of such post-WWII ghost films as Kaneto Shindo's **ONIBABA** (1964, reviewed VW 46:68) and Masaki Kobayashi's **KWAIDAN** (1965, reviewed VW 69:45), and fulfills the promise of Kiyoshi Kurosawa's prescient "post-post-war" spooker **SWEET HOME** (*Suïto Hômu*, 1989, reviewed VW 43:15) in creating an international taste for supernatural thrillers from the East.

Directly inspired by **THE EXORCIST** and its subtextual concern with the death of communication between young and old, **RING** localizes horror in the rift separating the generations of pre- and post-war Japan, where those born after 1960 are branded *bataakusai* ("stinking of butter") by elders who endured wartime privation. Whelped in modernity and disassociated from tradition, the

Westernized victims of **RING** find themselves linked in a circuit of extinction via the same technology that once afforded them the luxury of living independently. Although Nakata and scenarist Hiroshi Takahashi stop short of demonizing Western culture, the Ring curse nonetheless rains punishment upon a generation that has sold itself out for the acquisition of exotic habits (baseball, late night TV, fast food). Buried within the film's beat-the-clock scenario is a lamentation for the traditional Japanese family: the Yamamuras are eulogized as a once-thriving fishing family "all but out of the business now," while the ruined marriage of Reiko and Ryûji is clearly the victim of careerism (when Ryûji passes his latchkey kid on the street, the boy shows no sign of recognition). What gives **RING** uncommon depth for a horror film is its passionate insistence on making these self-possessed, literally divorced protagonists connect current events to their point of origin, making the curse less about revenge than about getting the family back together.

Deliberately paced and disarmingly polite in its tendering of shocks, **RING** does manage to rack up an impressive number of hair-raising setpieces, beginning with the initial scene of Tomoko relating an unsettling experience ("I saw a weird video the other day") to sleepover friend Masami (Hitomi Satô)—a scene that modulates its suspense in direct proportion to how much belief each girl admits to investing in the curse.

TV reporter Nanako Matsushima bites the investigative bullet by watching a cursed videocassette.





Everyone who watches the cursed tape of RING has one week to live. During that period, photographs of those marked for death are smudged like this, confirming their doom.

Likely based on **SCREAM**'s opening act (in which schoolgirl Drew Barrymore suffers telephone terror in her ostensibly safe suburban environment), **RING**'s prologue is all the more unnerving for its reliance on acting over editing razzle-dazzle. Nakata proceeds stealthily, slowly dialing up the intensity of his effects to make **RING**'s first real jolt come from the nerve-shattering ringing of a telephone (a trick cribbed from **THE EXORCIST**). Throughout, Nakata doles out the creeps with such assured control that, by the time the film reaches its instantly classic *dénouement*—an invention of Nakata/Takahashi, influenced by David Cronenberg's **VIDEODROME**, but reaching all the way back to Ladislav Starevich's 1915 silent short **THE PORTRAIT** [reviewed VW 70:10, as an extra on the Russian **VIJ** DVD]—the audience's need for a cathartic collective scream is almost unbearable. **RING**'s relaxed pace occasionally works at cross-purpose (complaints that the film's midsection is dull cannot be entirely dismissed), but Nakata maintains a consistent level of dread and mourning throughout that he never taints with false scares or tension-relieving humor.

Apprenticed to the S&M porno mill of Nikkatsu Studios, Hideo Nakata's directorial debut was the Hiroshi Takahashi-scripted **GHOST ACTRESS** [*Joyû-rei*, 1996], broadcast recently on The Sundance Channel as **DON'T LOOK UP!**. The story

of a modern film crew bedeviled by images of an old movie that burn themselves into the rushes, **GHOST ACTRESS** is a slight but effective thriller that has much in common with the **RING** films (a past tragedy hazily recalled, the cold comfort of technology, the distorted visage of a childlike apparition); its subtle strengths persuaded author Kôji Suzuki to recommend Nakata for the job of adapting **RING** for the big screen. Working with cinematographer Junichirô Hayashi (who later shot the equally atmospheric **CHARISMA** and **PULSE** for Kiyoshi Kurosawa) and production designer Iwao Saitô, Nakata etches **RING** with a cold color palette of uninviting tea-stained interiors and chilly rustic exteriors, using water as a *leitmotif* suggesting passage, containment and contamination. (The film's credits roll over a shot of heaving waves that seems like a magnification of embryonic brine.) Characteristic of the new *tsunami* of J-horror, **RING** punctuates stretches of eerie quietude with sharp blasts from an evocative score by composer Kenji Kawai, whose career began with anime soundtracks and more recently has included scores for Nakata's live action thrillers **CHAOS** and the **RING**-like (and equally aqueous) **DARK WATER**.

Although Tartan's DVD improves upon the early bootleg tapes that excited Western word-of-mouth, this PAL disc leaves something to be



In SPIRAL, Koichi Satô stars as an unlikely hero in the continuing story of Sadako—a pathologist haunted by the drowning death of his young son.

desired. The letterboxed (1.74:1), anamorphic transfer is clear, but the contrasts are only serviceable; the positive print source bears more than its share of damage for a relatively recent production, with somewhat degraded color, speckling at reel changes and one jarring audio pop. Non-removable English subtitles represent a solid, if liberal translation (the line “Frolic in brine, goblins be thine” is more literally translated as “If you keep playing in water, the monster will come for you”). It’s to the credit of Hideo Nakata and his team that **RING** remains not only watchable given these blemishes, but that it transcends its less than optimal presentation. The disc has 12 chapters. A 6-page essay by Mark Kermode interprets the film’s appeal as “the perfect home-horror experience.” Filmographies are supplied for Nanako Matsushima, Hiroyuki Sanada, Hideo Nakata and Kenji Kawai. There is a 10-shot stills gallery, 4 pages of press quotes (backed by a chilling soundtrack cue) and letterboxed trailers for **RING** (50s), **RING 2** (39s) and Takashi Miike’s **AUDITION** (1m 21s).

As a bonus, Sadako’s video (45s) can be watched on its own, but it is prefaced by a disclaimer from Tartan, who decline liability for “physical injury or psychological trauma” and leave it to the viewer (in true William Castle fashion) to accept or decline. What will *you* do?

SPIRAL

Rasen

aka **RING 2**

aka **SEVEN NIGHTS’ STRANGE TALK 2** (Taiwan)
1998, ThunderMedia, #DVD-7349, DD-2.0/LB/+,
\$15.99, 97m 21s, DVD-0, NTSC

The merits of **RING**’s intended go-with, **SPIRAL** (confusingly, an alternate title also for Akihiro Higuchi’s bizarre 2000 fantasy **Uzumaki**, also known as **VORTEX**) are difficult to assess on this side of the Pacific, as English subtitles have yet to grace any DVD or VCD release. The bones of the story lay out like this: reeling from the drowning death of his young son and the dissolution of his marriage, forensic pathologist Mitsuo Andô (**GONIN**’s Koichi Satô), is contemplating suicide at the moment he is summoned to perform a postmortem on the body of friend Ryûji Takayama (Hiroyuki Sanada again), dead of undisclosed causes. Puzzling over a cryptic message retrieved from inside the deceased’s stomach (which recalls code games the two played while at university), Andô is drawn to Ryûji’s student Mai (Miki Nakatani, seen briefly in **RING**), with whom he shares a bond of mutual grief. The death of Ryûji’s ex-wife Reiko and their son Yoichi in a car accident prompts Reiko’s senior, Yoshino (**GODZILLA 2000**’s Matsushige Yutaka) to turn over to Andô

the dead reporter's notebook and a copy of the cursed tape. After watching the video, the death-obsessed Andô smashes the cassette and begins counting down the days until he can die. During the week, Yoshino succumbs to a virus similar to smallpox and Mai, after making love with Andô, disappears. Searching for Mai right up until his final hour expires, Andô finds only that Sadako's curse has failed to claim him—but why?

There are several likely explanations as to why **SPIRAL** failed so resoundingly with **RING** fans. While it fleshes out the original's subtext of urban loneliness, **SPIRAL** veers early on (during the scene of Ryûji's autopsy) towards full-blown horror, with the dead man's visceral compartment emptied on camera of its vital organs. (Hajime Matsumoto crafted a similarly unsettling prosthetic for the Masato Harada-directed forest fantasy **INUGAMI** [2001], in which he transformed the interior of a woman's womb into a dollhouse!) Worse luck for the squeamish, Ryûji opens his eyes mid-autopsy and sits up on the steel table to address the startled Andô. While the effects are top-notch, many felt this gnarly setpiece was a betrayal of **RING**'s old school avoidance of bloody spectacle; others were miffed at the forfeiture of chills for po-faced existential moping and the erotic grappling of the suicidal Andô and the morose Mai. The real contract breaker, however, is the restricted face time

with **RING**'s *raison d'être*—Sadako. Although the producers hired dancer Hinako Saeki to play the vengeful wraith, they get nowhere near the mileage out of her that the first film did using Kabuki performer Rie Inou; furthermore, a plot point (peculiar to this adaptation and not in the novel) requiring Sadako to re-enter the physical world in the form of another character dilutes the tension, not to mention the terror, considerably.

Shot by Makoto Watanabe, **SPIRAL** retains the chilly, uninviting atmosphere of the first film. Writer-director Jôji "George" Iida (who wrote the 1995 *RINGU* telefilm) keeps effects work to a minimum and the drama controlled and truthful. The moon-faced Koichi Sato may not be to everyone's taste as the anguished Andô, but Miki Nakatani has more fun here than in the other films and Shingo Tsurumi (**FREEZE ME**) is excellent as Andô's skeptical colleague Miyashita. While the characterizations may be on the sketchy side (but not moreso than in **RING**), the visuals are sufficiently evocative to allow viewers to fill in the blanks; no subtitles are needed for the anguished flashback of Andô, having failed to rescue his drowning son, looking down benumbed at strands of the boy's black hair that have snagged in his wedding band (a seemingly inconsequential detail that gains significance in the film's final minutes).

Miki Nakatani's possession by the restless spirit of Sadako in SPIRAL culminates in imagery familiar from David Lynch's TWIN PEAKS.



The bare bones DVD from Thunder Media boasts only Japanese and Chinese subtitles and has a mere 9 chapters. Most of the film plays out full frame, although the image occasionally switches to other gauges. That it lacks English translation makes it ironic that this DVD is the best-looking of the Japanese RING films under review here. While some night scenes suffer from slight artifacting, daytime and interior scenes have superior color and flesh tones to the Tartan transfers. A letterboxed VCD edition of the film has been released in Hong Kong by the now-defunct Ocean Shores label (#CV-699, D/SS/OOP) but it has Chinese subtitles only. A subtitled British DVD is scheduled for release by Artsmagic Ltd. later this year.

In Japan, **SPIRAL** was adapted in manga form—as **Rasen**—by Sakura Mizuki, which remains in print; Javier Lopez’s Ringworld website (www.ringworld.somrux.com) offers an exclusive English translation of this comics version, which is reportedly superior to the film. This text also serves as a useful crutch-of-sorts to those interested in braving this unsubtitled disc.

RING 2

Ringu 2

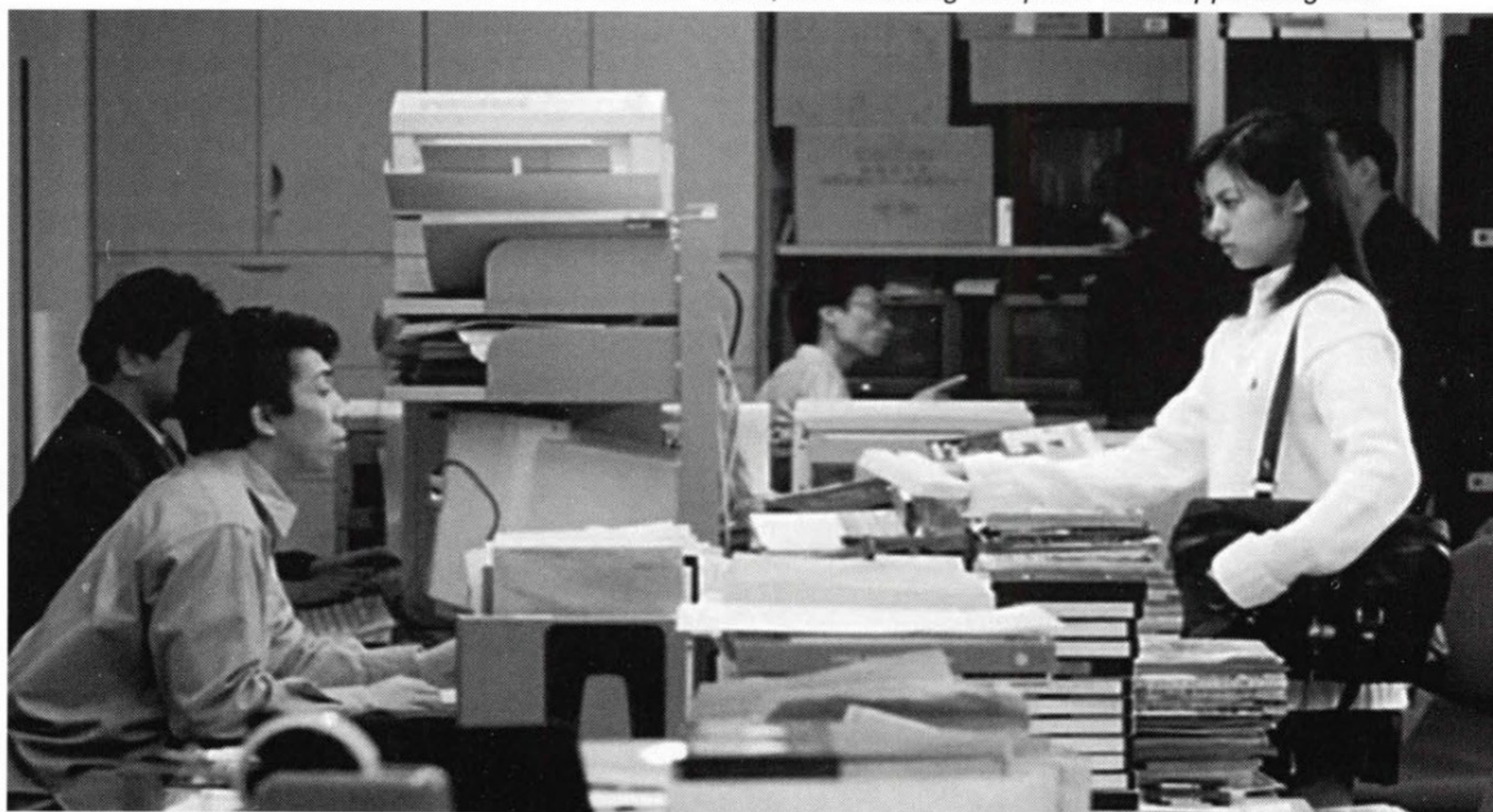
1999, Tartan Video, #TVD 3329, DD-5.1/16:9/LB/ST/+, £19.99, 95m 8s, DVD-0, PAL

After the failure of **SPIRAL**, Hideo Nakata and Hiroshi Takahashi were obliged by their

producers to crank out **RING 2**, a follow-up that would take the narrative in another, more profitable direction. During a belated postmortem, the corpse of Sadako (played again by Rie Inou) is determined to have expired only during the last year of her 30 year entombment (“Which means she was alive in that well all that time”). With Reiko and her son Yoichi (Nanako Matsushima and Rikiya Otaka, reprising their roles) missing without a trace, Ryuji Takayama’s student Mai (Miki Nakatani, assuming the lead) begins her own investigation, aided by Reiko’s colleague Okazaki (**GHOST ACTRESS**’ Yûrei Yanagi). After receiving a cryptic telepathic message from Ryûji (Hiroyuki Sanada, used sparingly), Mai locates the reclusive Reiko, whose son has withdrawn into non-verbal communication. By observing psychokinetic phenomena connected to both Yoichi and Masami Kurahashi (more screen time for the delightful Hitomi Satô), confined to a sanitarium since witnessing the death of Reiko’s niece, Mai and scientist Kawajiri (**AUCTION**’s Fumiyo Kohinata) conclude that Sadako’s legacy of fear and hatred have concentrated into a living form of lethal psychic energy. Returning to Sadako’s birthplace, Yoichi—who has begun to lash out with his psychokinesis—is used as the subject of a desperate experiment to free the world of Sadako’s wrath.

RING 2 is not an adaptation of Kôji Suzuki’s 1998 novel LOOP (the third book of his *Ringu* trilogy, promised as a sequel to **SPIRAL** in that film’s

RING 2: Reporter Yûrei Yanagi promises high school student Kyoko Fukada that he will watch her dub of the cursed video, not realizing the price of disappointing her.





Miki Nakatani returns in RING 2, providing her character with a different fate—which involves another harrowing descent into the well of Sadako.

closing credits), but is an original creation of Hideo Nakata and Hiroshi Takahashi that nonetheless returns the narrative arc to the clinical concerns of the original novel (most of which was scuttled to keep **RING** rooted in folklore and urban myth). While the development feels logical as a deeper exploration into and revelation of events that seemed random in the first film, the results are mixed and **RING 2** ultimately adds only bulk to the mix without improving upon the recipe. **RING**'s subthemes of cultural alienation have been dropped for the most part, in favor of daft pseudo-science and muddled metaphysics, and the characterizations feel more skeletal than ever. Miki Nakatani's shell-shocked heroine makes for one glum gumshoe (check her out as the giddy *femme fatale* of Nakata's *noirish* **CHAOS**), while Nanako Matsushima's participation is limited entirely to the film's middle third. Supporting characters feel unimaginatively one-note, notably Kenjiro Ishimaru's bullying detective and Fumiyo Kohinata's concerned clinician (who transforms into an overreaching mad scientist faster than you can say "Otto Kruger"). Most damaging is **RING 2**'s reliance on wringing suspense out of the sacrifice of characters from the original film, which feels cheap and nearly as blasphemous as the insult that **ALIEN**³ was to **ALIENS**.

On the plus side, Nakata pulls off a handful of original scares: the apparition of pallid hands

gripping the railing of Mai's apartment terrace, Mai's ghostly peek-a-boo with Sadako's mother, and Sadako's Dracula-like climb out of her not-so-final resting place each deliver a palpable *frisson*. Kenji Kawai's score preserves a sense of tension even in the lamest scenes (which invariably involve a character being fitted with an **EX-ORCIST II**-style electrode cap for monitoring on instruments guaranteed to explode) and the film is shot by Hideo Yamamoto (subbing for Junichirô Hayashi) with a persuasive feeling of impending disaster. (Yamamoto also served as DP on such Japanese crossover hits as **AUDITION** and Takeshi Kitano's **HANA-BI**.) **RING 2** is most compelling in a subplot involving Yûrei Yanagi's cub reporter Okazaki (seemingly promoted, since **RING**, from gofer to news team captain) and a frazzled high school girl (Kyôko Fukada) who alerts him to the video curse and reluctantly provides him with a copy. Failing to follow through on his promise to watch the dupe—which consigns the girl to certain death—Okazaki gets his karmic comeuppance while attempting a conscience-appeasing erasure of their video interview; as Okazaki's tape sticks on a jerking freeze frame of the girl, the image morphs into an accusatory augury of fate. This sublimely creepy moment alone makes **RING 2** worthwhile, albeit primarily to fans pre-sold on the series.

Tartan's **RING 2** DVD is certainly an improvement. The 1.78:1 letterboxed, anamorphically



*Shin Eun-Kyung stars in **THE RING VIRUS**, a Korean remake of **RING** that retells the story while throwing quite a few curves of its own.*

enhanced transfer is in better condition, with fewer instances of print damage. The Dolby Digital 5.1 sound mix is cleaner and nicely balanced between hushed dialogue and startling sound effects. Once again, English subtitles are burned-in and the disc has only a dozen chapters. Filmographies are included for director Nakata, screenwriter Takahashi, novelist Suzuki and actress Miki Nakatani. "Film notes" by Tony Rayns trumpet **RING 2** for its "physical, psychological and moral nightmares which become more and more grisly as their implications sink in," but these comments incline sharply toward hyperbole and are unlikely to persuade more skeptical viewers. The extras are rounded out by a merchandise gallery (which unbelievably encompasses Sadako keychains, coffee mugs and mouse pads) and letterboxed trailers for the entire theatrical **RING** oeuvre (including a 1m 23s spot for **RING 0**), as well as for John Woo's **HARD-BOILED** (3m 12s), **AU-DITION** (1m 21s), the Korean *policier* **NO-WHERE TO HIDE** (1m 53s) and Wong Kar-wai's **IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE** (3m 17s). Tartan's keepcase copy misidentifies Miki Nakatani's character as a journalist and the alphabetical cast listing gives preferential billing to bit players Daisuke Ban and Katsumi Muramatsu over leads Miki Nakatani and Nanako Matsushima (whose name is misspelled).

THE RING VIRUS

Ring

1999, Bitwin Co, #BDV D005, DD-5.1/MA/16:9/LB/ST/+, \$21.99, 106m 3s, DVD-0, NTSC

Japan footed half the budget for **THE RING VIRUS**, a 1999 Korean language clone of **RING**. Less a crass, cashcow remake than a thoughtful and often mischievous reworking of its source, **THE RING VIRUS** replays familiar events (the death of the niece, the trip to the island, the well descent) but alters plot points from the source novel to catch **RING** fans offguard: the cataclysmic event depicted on the cursed video is a seismic wave rather than a volcanic eruption, and the first victim's death is chillingly communicated via the telephone. As in **RING**, the journalist protagonist remains female (Shin Eun-Kyung), aided this time out by icy pathologist Choi (**BICHUNMOO**'s Chong Chin-yong) in the service of saving her young daughter (true to the novel). Rather than focusing on the generation gap, **THE RING VIRUS** targets the seemingly irreconcilable rift between the sexes, a theme extended to a shocking (for those unfamiliar with the source novel) revelation about the Sadako character—here named "Eun-suh." Instead of having the baleful Eun-suh (Bae Doo-na, seen more recently in Jae-eun Jeong's teen satire **TAKE CARE OF MY CAT**) survive in the well

for a protracted period of time, **THE RING VIRUS** limits the martyred girl's survival time to a mere seven days, which pays off nicely in light of her one-week curse (a plot specific swiped by Gore Verbinski's American remake).

While it is difficult for **RING** fans to appreciate **THE RING VIRUS** as a separate entity, director Kim Dong-bin delivers his remake with an execution that is consistently tense, sensitive and also witty (a cut from the hiss of TV static to the fizz of Pepsi hints at human life devolving behind a scrim of white noise). It could be argued that Kim has crafted his film as a companion piece to **RING**, meant to be seen not exclusive of the Japanese hit but as an alternate take that is more faithful to the spirit, if not the letter, of the Suzuki novel. Kim and co-scenarists Kong Su-chang and Shim Hye-won (who both contributed to the screenplay for the Korean psycho-thriller **TELL ME SOMETHING**) have more fun with the principal players, requiring Sun-joo and Choi to masquerade a mutual attraction/desperation with ironic nuggets of contempt ("I'd like to see that smile wiped off your face after I'm dead"). Again, the theme of isolation prevails, with Kim and his talented cinematographer Hwang Cheol-Hyeon capturing many scenes with wide angles that strand the actors in under-furnished sets, magnifying their vulnerability. Kim is more of a romantic than Hideo Nakata, permitting his protagonists a lovely last moment together before things go pear-shaped. Unlikely ever to escape its also-ran status, **THE RING VIRUS** is nonetheless recommended as a horror tale whose shocks derive from the awareness that "We



only know parts of reality, but we can't know the beginning or the end—that's life."

The all-region NTSC DVD of **THE RING VIRUS** from Bitwin Co. is strictly no-frills. The disc is letterboxed at 1.78:1 and 16:9 enhanced for widescreen playback. A pan&scan option is also available (set your players accordingly); on the unit we used, fast-forwarding or toggling from chapter to chapter knocked the widescreen image into P&S mode. Although some grain is noticeable, the colors are healthy (particularly fleshtones, and the blues and greens used for aquatic accents) and the presentation is otherwise very satisfying. Occasional print damage comes in the form of frame scratches, but there are no major blemishes. English and Japanese subtitles are optional, with the English translation being a bit problematic: the message on the dead niece's text pager at first reads "We saw it was not have to see?" but is later translated correctly as "We shouldn't have watched it." Sound options include Dolby Stereo Surround and a more robust 5.1 mix, better to appreciate an eclectic and haunting score by Won Il and Chang Young-Kyoo that runs the gamut from folk strings and music box tinkling to teeth-rattling percussive bursts and glowering synth scales. The disc has only 7 chapters.

RING 0

Ringu 0: Baasudei

"Ring 0: Birthday"

2000, Tartan Video, #TVD 3354, DD-5.1/MA/16:9/LB/ST/+, £19.99, 98m 43s, DVD-0, PAL

An extrapolation of Kôji Suzuki's 1999 short story "Lemonheart," **RING 0** (subtitled "Birthday," though this does not appear on the packaging) is a 30-years-earlier prequel that establishes the particulars of the tragedy of Sadako Yamamura. Eleven years after her mother's suicide (following a scandal aroused by the unexplained death of a skeptical journalist who publicly mocked her psychic abilities), the introverted Sadako (played now by Yukie Nakama) is assigned by her physician Kuno (Ryûji Mizukami) to a therapeutic apprenticeship with a Tokyo theatre troupe. After behaving abusively to Sadako, whom she resents for catching the wandering eye of director Shigemori (Takeshi Wakamatsu, the Mephistophelean medico of Sogo Ishii's **ANGEL DUST**), lead actress Aiko (Kaoru Okunuki) drops dead in the

Unlike the Japanese RING films, THE RING VIRUS presents the heroine's child as a little girl, as in Kôji Suzuki's original novel.



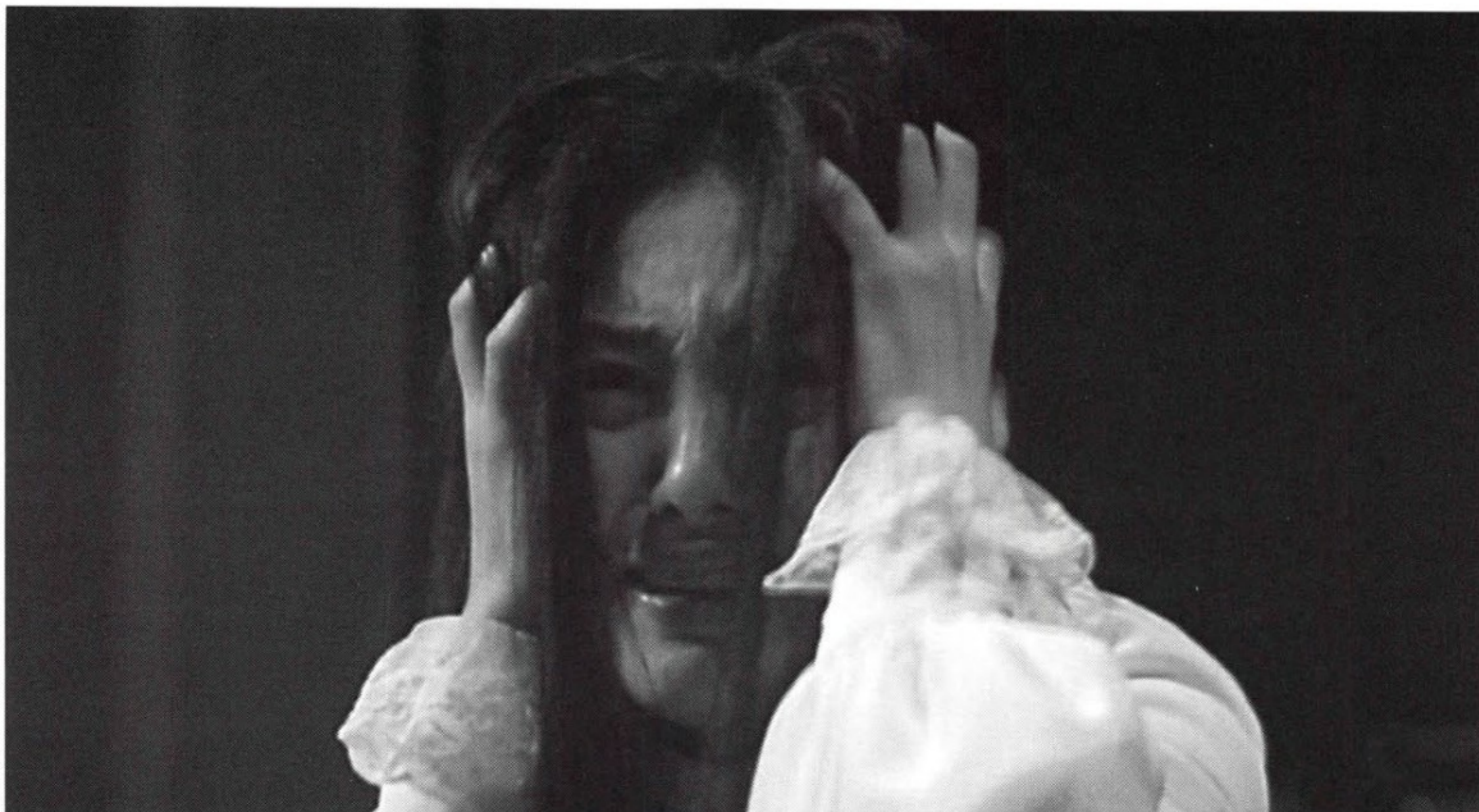
RING 0 takes the RING cycle back to its beginning, with Yukie Nakama giving a memorable performance as the emotionally troubled psychic, Sadako.

wings during dress rehearsal. Hoping to exploit her nascent telepathic abilities (“You’re perfect for an actress”), the manipulative Shigemori pushes Sadako into the lead role. Meanwhile, a reporter (Yoshiko Tanaka) still grieving over the death of her fiancé—the journalist willed to death by the young Sadako during Shizuko’s disastrous psychic demonstration—tracks the girl to Tokyo, where she plots to expose her onstage in front of the opening night audience. Knowing of Sadako’s hidden ability to heal by touch and fearing for her well-being, Dr. Kuno races to the theater—but arrives too late to stop the inevitable carnage.

The pyrotechnics that erupt near **RING 0**’s 60m mark recall the prom debacle of Brian De Palma’s **CARRIE**, an obvious influence (with sympathetic characters similarly spared no quarter by Sadako’s displeasure). Despite the fact that director Norio Tsuruta—who graduated from this to the rural fantasy **SCARECROW** [*Kakashi*, 2001)—must shoulder the backstory burden of having to explain more than he evokes, he still manages to make **RING 0** a worthy addition to the series by showing the living Sadako to be as haunted a soul as the victims of her escalating rage. While earlier entries plumbed the dualities of past/present, male/female and old/young, Tsuruta and returning screenwriter Hiroshi Takahashi exploit what was always alluring about Sadako Yamamura, namely the tension between the innocence of girlhood and the travails of womanhood—two extreme

states of being between which the undead Sadako hangs forever frozen. The possible existence of *two* Sadakos, that the tortured girl was somehow able to isolate her benign and malevolent selves, is broached early on; Sadako’s divided spirit, her twinned abilities to heal or destroy, supplies **RING 0** with its emotional spine (the subtitle “Birthday” reflects both Sadako’s defining moment and the Japanese reliance on one word to mean both “re-birth” and “play”—as in a VHS tape) and suggests an apocalyptic turn of events that goes largely unexplored—although the unpopular **SPIRAL** did end on a revelatory note, urging the series in this direction, with Sadako all but crowned the Anti-Christ and poised to kick Creation up a notch.

Working with cinematographer Takahide Shibunushi, who also shot Kiyoshi Kurosawa’s made-for-TV **SÉANCE** (*Korei*, 2000), Norio Tsuruta keeps **RING 0** stylistically in line with previous series entries, alternating the by-now familiar frosty exteriors with the drab, comfortless confines of theater and hospital interiors. Although the 1970s setting is never persuasively communicated (perhaps intentionally, for fear of making the piece look dated), director and cameraman keep the proceedings sufficiently sepulchral through a procession of subtly unnerving setpieces whose disquieting quietude is occasionally sun-dered with a shock visual (the blind dead eyes of Aiko and, later, the spectre of her accusing ghost). Standing in for series composer Kenji Kawai,



Onstage during her first performance as an actress, Sadako's mental powers are unleashed as she responds to the antagonism of her fellow players.

Shinichiro Ogata provides a conventional but spirited orchestral accompaniment. Yukie Nakama makes for an affecting anti-heroine, nicely opposed by Yoshiko Tanaka (the heroine of Shohei Imamura's bleak Hiroshima document **BLACK RAIN**) as the militant journalist and by Kumiko Asô (the shell-shocked storyteller of Kiyoshi Kurosawa's **PULSE**) as a costumer whose sympathy for Sadako eventually turns to distrust. As Sadako's father figure Dr. Ikuma, Daisuke Ban is given more to do here than in any of the other **RING** films (in which he had little better than walk-on status), culminating in an outburst of violence that returns the series at its point of origin, bringing to mind T.S. Eliot's immortal line about arriving back "where we started [to] know the place for the first time."

RING 0 was released in Japan in January 2000 and made its UK debut on DVD in early 2002. Sold by Tartan as part of their "Asia Extreme" line (rather than the "Tartan Terror" series to which the first two Toho **RING** films belong), the disc is letterboxed at 1.78:1 and is 16:9 enhanced. The colors here are as muddy as in the previous releases, the contrasts somewhat weak and at times slight smearing is perceptible. The bottom line: viewers unhappy with the look of the previous Tartan discs will be equally displeased with **RING 0**, while those reasonably satisfied will remain so. The Dolby Digital 5.1 sound mix is well-done and the disc has a greater than usual number of chapter stops—16 in all. English subtitles are provided.

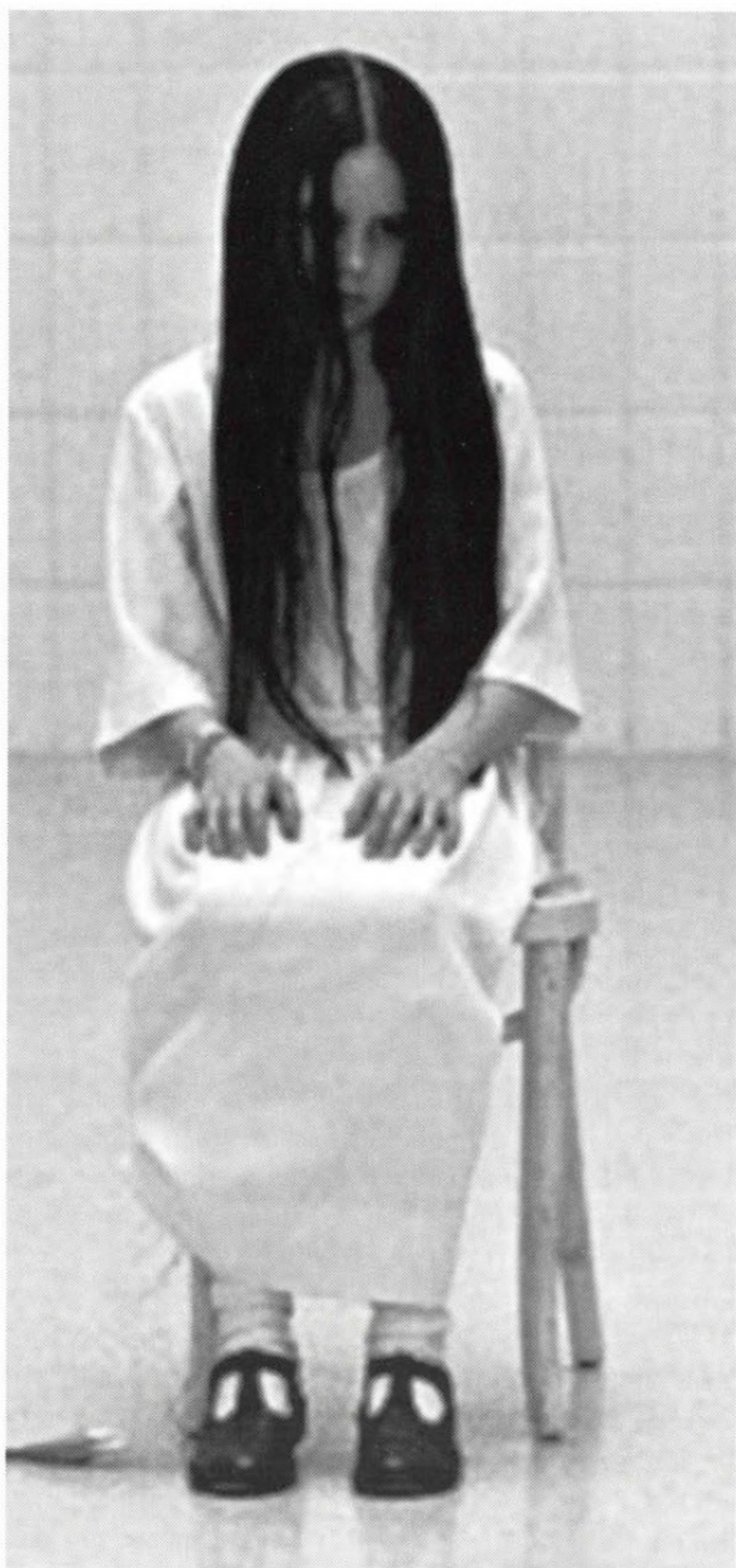
Extras consist of filmographies for Norio Tsuruta, Yukie Nakama and Kôji Suzuki, a stills gallery comprising all of 5 color shots, and trailers for the three films making up Toho's "Ring Cycle," as well as for other titles in the "Asia Extreme" line: **AUCTION**, **NOWHERE TO HIDE**, Kinji Fukasaku's controversial **BATTLE ROYALE** and an additional trailer for both **RING** and **RING 2**. Speaking in praise of the film is critic Mark Wyatt, whose "film notes" compare **RING 0** to a Victorian whodunit and avoid the hyperbolic enthusiasm of Mark Kermode and Tony Rayns, which (however well-meaning) threatened to oversell the earlier films.

THE RING (2002)

An hour into Hideo Nakata's **RING**, an aged Oshima islander relates his fear of the sea ("Every year it swallows some of us") to which he notes both Sadako and her mother were inexplicably drawn. Although this phobia refers specifically to the migration of the island's young to the mainland (and the taint of crossbreeding), anyone with a world atlas can discern a deeper reading that reflects Japan's longitudinal proximity to America—or more specifically, to Hollywood.

The story goes that husband and wife producers Walter F. Parkes and Laurie MacDonald secured **RING**'s remake rights within three hours of watching a bootleg video. The announcement that **MOUSE HUNT** director Gore Verbinski and **SCREAM 3** scenarist Ehren Kruger were on the

DreamWorks payroll came as grim news for fans who shuddered at the prospect of a snarky American rethink, but encouragement was forthcoming with the casting of Naomi Watts, whose daring performance in David Lynch's **MULHOLLAND DR.** brought to the project a dose of anti-Hollywood credibility. Despite some 11th hour tinkering—cuts to eliminate scenes that tested badly, violence trims to ensure a PG-13 rating and the addition of a new exposition scene involving actress Jane Alexander—**THE RING** opened on October 18, 2002 to largely positive notices and greater box office rewards, recouping a third of its \$45 million budget in its opening weekend alone.



While an appreciable loss in cultural resonance might be expected given the American setting, Verbinski and Kruger (with uncredited support from Scott Frank) paint a persuasively pessimistic portrait of a rootless, alienated society stunted by self-possession. Because Seattle is not Tokyo, the victims of **THE RING** die not in the act of reaching out to the world but in turning away from it, in rejecting preoccupied parents who cannot help but perpetuate a cycle of familial “disappointment” they themselves had hoped to escape (which makes Verbinski’s remake closer kin to **THE EXORCIST** than Hideo Nakata’s original). While Asian teens were shown to laugh off the sting of being left home alone by absentee parents, their American cousins exhibit the melancholic sequelae of neglect, making **THE RING** play out like the fulfillment of a Biblical curse whose sins-of-the-father insidiousness lies in the agony of parents forced to watch their offspring fall victim to the wages of inattention. If **THE RING** errs on the side of over-explanation, in making concrete those ambiguities allowed free range in the original, it could be argued that this up-front approach addresses an American hesitance to acknowledge the obvious, and lays bare a social discomfort masqued by the popular perception of America as a carefree, individualist and eminently disposable culture free of the weight of generational obligation.

THE RING is less indebted to its source in its second half, where things get more wobbly. Verbinski and DP Bajan Bazelli (an early credit for whom was the disappointing but relevant **PUMPKINHEAD**) have upgraded the cursed video (which now bears a prophetic aspect that allows its imagery to find fulfillment in flesh and landscape), but this arty montage is too patently *Dadaesque* to unnerve. (Verbinski should have subbed this job out to Guy Maddin or the Brothers Quay.) Tension is likewise reduced with Verbinski’s cutaways to cod-**KOYAANISQATSI** time-lapse photography and overuse of flashbacks. Shifting psychic powers from the story’s father figure (Martin Henderson) to his illegitimate son (David Dorfman) invites inevitable comparisons to **THE SIXTH SENSE**, but the remake’s most pointless addition is a subplot involving horse breeding as an explanation for how the Sadako character (here rechristened “Samara” and bearing an unfortunate resemblance to Wednesday Addams) came into the world. Reshooting has

In Gore Verbinski’s US remake THE RING, Sadako is renamed Samara Morgan (Daveigh Chase) and is less of a victim, more of a real monster.



Naomi Watts, fresh from MULHOLLAND DR., reenacts the familiar pose of recovery and acceptance at the bottom of the well in THE RING.

diluted the thrust of this unpalatable digression, although the implication remains clear. (If Sadako started off in **RING** as Madeline Usher and wound up in **RING 0** as William Wilson, what does this development make her—Frédérique von Metzengerstein?) **THE RING**'s paranoid momentum does transcend this curious sidebar, as well as a distressingly convincing animal death and one of cinema's most labor-intensive suicides, but this only proves the superfluity of these "improvements."

Less than a month out from its October release, **THE RING** was not only a huge success in America but was the No. 1 film at the Japanese box office. (While some American critics groused at the notion of a Hollywood remake of **RING**, it remains doubtful how many of them would have deigned to see the original had a Hollywood remake never been announced.) In Japan, publishers Kadokawa Shoten have reissued Kôji Suzuki's trilogy and short story collection, with **RINGU**'s cover bearing the DreamWorks poster art! All of this points to the inevitable sequel, for which Naomi Watts is already contractually obligated.

Those looking for a cycle in all this need only note the wealth of J-horror that attended the success of Hideo Nakata's **RING**: Kiyoshi Kurosawa's **CURE** (1997), Ataru Oikawa's **TOMIE** (1998) and

its sequels **TOMIE: REPLAY** (2000) and **TOMIE: RE-BIRTH** (2001), Shinya Tsukamoto's **GEMINI** (1999, which traps another character in a well), the Tim Burtonesque **Uzumaki** and Takashi Miike's **AUDITION**, which earned the privilege of theatrical playdates in the States, providing Americans with the ultimate confirmation that hell hath no fury like a woman scorned. With American remakes announced for Kurosawa's apocalyptic **PULSE** and the Pang Brothers' **THE EYE** (which samples from both **RING** and **THE SIXTH SENSE**), it's easy to foresee the gears of production being oiled across the Pacific to bang out further explorations of Eastern-style fear and dread for Western consumption. Like Sadako's undying wrath, there's just no getting around it.

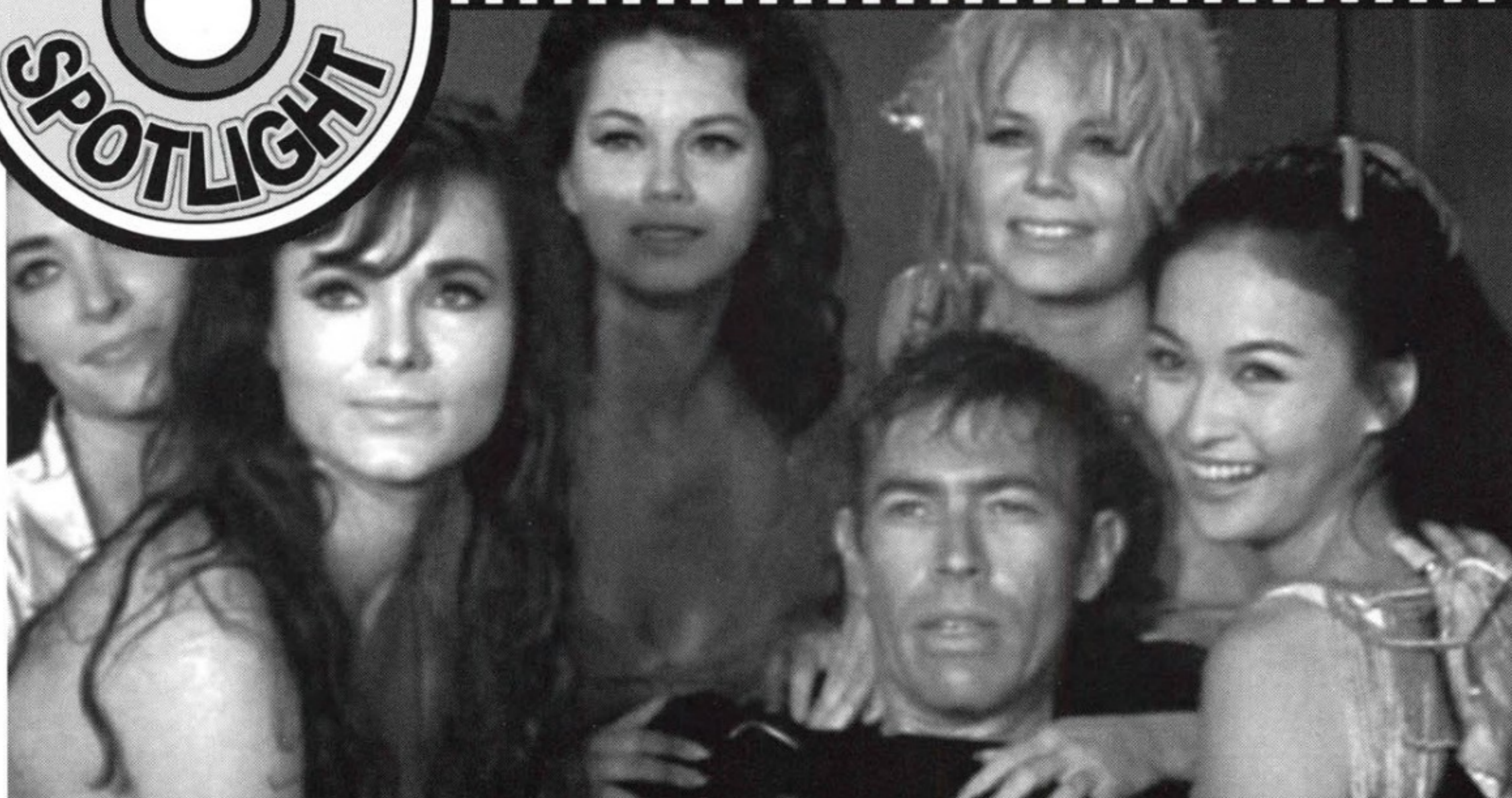
Author's Note: This article would not have been possible without the assistance and insight of Javier Lopez, a Houston-based Japanese-to-English translator whose "Ringworld" website (<http://ringworld.somrux.com>) is the Internet's best resource for all things **RING**-related.

The RING discs reviewed in this article are available from Poker Industries and Xploited Cinema—see Sources for ordering information. —RHS.





Flint Lives!



Reviews by Tim Lucas

OUR MAN FLINT

1966, 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, DD-1.0/16:9/LB/CC/+, \$14.98, 107m 21s, DVD-1

IN LIKE FLINT

1967, 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, DD-1.0/16:9/LB/CC/+, \$14.98, 114m 20s, DVD-1

My task of reviewing 20th Century Fox's DVD releases of the two Derek Flint movies coincides with the recent death of actor James Coburn, who—with this starring role—attained the summit of Sixties cool in a way that effectively bridged the generation gap. A character appealing to WWII-generation conservatives as well as nirvana-seeking counter-culturists, Derek Flint was conceived by screenwriter Hal Fimberg not as a spoof of James Bond, but as a more admirable, American answer to Ian Fleming's ruthless and amoral agent. The first Flint movie, **OUR MAN FLINT**, followed the Christmas gift of **THUNDERBALL** into US theaters one month later, in January 1966, beating Columbia's competing **THE SILENCERS** (the first of their

Matt Helm series, starring Dean Martin) into the marketplace by several weeks.

Before Flint, James Coburn's screen persona had always been that of a lanky adventurer of singular style, the hip outsider whose club-of-one we all wanted to join. As one of **THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN** (1960), he wielded knives instead of the standard issue six-shooter, and he would perpetuate this nonconformist stance in other roles well after Flint, appearing in Sergio Leone's **A FISTFUL OF DYNAMITE** [*Giù la testa*, 1971] as an Irishman who would rather line his coat with explosives than wear a holster, rather ride a motorcycle than a horse. Due more to Coburn than to the actual writing, Derek Flint (who, unlike Bond and Helm, did not originate in published fiction) marked an important new stage in the development of the screen hero. Flint is clearly a capitalist, a man of great wealth, but he also sustains friendly relations with Cold War-era Moscow; he has attributes of

James Coburn as Derek Flint, surrounded by the rewards of a job well done (including Gila Golan, second from left) in OUR MAN FLINT.

the sexist, laughing at the idea of empowered women, but he is also a liberationist, freeing various women (indeed, friend and foe alike) from being hypnotically conditioned as mindless “pleasure units,” not interested in companionship that doesn’t come to him from a woman’s free will; he fights for right, but only for right *as he sees it*, existing always outside the system and playing only by his own rules.

In another inventive twist, Flint is not really an agent of ZOWIE (Zonal Organization for World Intelligence and Espionage), but rather a free agent—ZOWIE’s trump card when their enlisted deck fails. No being summoned to M’s office for Flint; instead, ZOWIE chief Lloyd C. Kramden (Lee J. Cobb) must approach Flint, hat in hand, walking into his state-of-the-art bachelor pad like some weary throwback to an earlier, frumpier stage in the evolution of Man. No Q is needed to instruct Flint in the utilization of delicate, miniaturized, classified tools of warfare; in **OUR MAN FLINT**, he shuns Kramden’s offer of a special attaché case equipped with 65 concealed tools and weapons, because he has already devised for himself a cigarette lighter with “82 functions—83, if you wish to light a cigar.”

The Flint films are usually cited as comedies, but while they both generate their share of laughs, this bracket underestimates the true measure of their appeal. The humor of Flint isn’t rooted in jokes or pratfalls, but rather in our delight at his

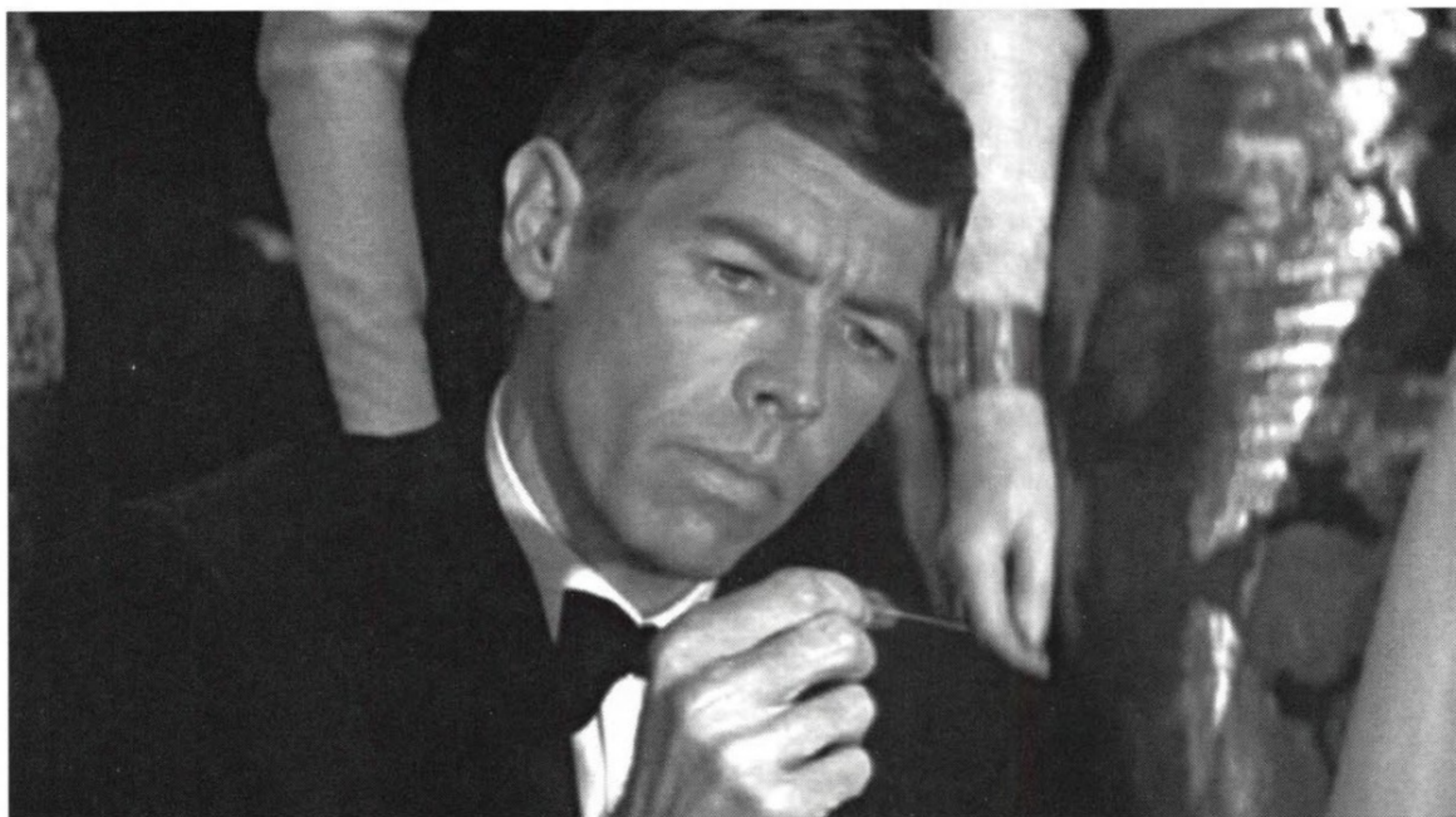
superhuman efficiency—yet even this facet of his rich character is grounded in poignancy when he humbly admits to an apoplectic Kramden that there is still “a great deal” he doesn’t know. Coburn wisely plays the part straight; even when Flint is at his most outrageous (laying waste to adversaries with high-kicking kung fu—in which Coburn was trained by Bruce Lee—or blurting out absurd commands in “the dolphin language”), there is a samurai centeredness and reserve in the bearing of this blue-eyed silver fox that makes him, while not exactly believable, exceedingly admirable. Flint is the dream of the self-made man that belongs to the boy in every man who watches.

“Satire” better describes the true nature of this diptych, but even this word fails to convey the fact that both Flint films work quite well as straightforward, escapist spy fantasy. In the first, Flint even takes a number of lives, stabbing one would-be challenger to death in the stall of a Marseilles pay toilet. Comic aspects are present, such as the ZOWIE acronym and the ever-extending frontiers of Flint’s knowledge, but everyone plays it straight, with not so much as a wink, leaving the satirical element invisible, intangible, yet magically ever-present.

OUR MAN FLINT opens with a procession of L.B. Abbott and Howard Lydecker miniature effects shots, magnificently revitalized in big screen 16:9, as the Galaxy Organization—led by Drs. Krepov (Rhys Williams), Wu (Peter Brocco) and

Flint capably disarms the island headquarters of villains who plan to rule the world by controlling its weather.





Flint's highly trained senses are able to trace a would-be assassin to Marseilles from the traces of unique bouillabaisse ingredients on a poison-tipped dart!

Schneider (Benson Fong)—demonstrate their technological mastery over the world's weather, before demanding the surrender of all world governments to their leadership. The international board of ZOWIE feed their requirements for a savior into various computers, and the answers all come back "Derek Flint." ZOWIE chief Lloyd Kramden (Cobb) is unsuccessful in soliciting Flint's help ("Of late, my interests are less governmental than personal," Flint explains), but the free agent is effectively recruited by the abduction of his four lovely housemates and a failed attempt on his life by beautiful Galaxy operative Gila (**THE VALLEY OF GWANGI**'s Gila Golan), whose business front is the Italian-based Exotica Beauty Company, manufacturers of cold cream. Led to Marseilles by the ingredients of a unique bouillabaisse recipe found on a poisoned dart, Flint discourages assistance from a thinly disguised 007 (Agent 0008, played by an uncredited Robert Gunner) and himself beds Gila, who becomes a decisive ally when he infiltrates Galaxy Island (more great Abbott & Lydecker miniatures, mattes and travelling mattes on display here) and falls into the imperious clutches of her sadistic, snooty associate Malcolm Rodney (Edward Mulhare). In an interesting twist, Galaxy's goal turns out to be nothing more sinister than eliminating war-like governments and achieving world peace. Its directors also show an appreciation of Flint's unique character and

genius in a way the US government has not shown itself to understand, and sometimes openly distrust, but Flint stands staunch in his adversity, reasoning that their concept of world peace is not his own.

20th has packaged **OUR MAN FLINT** in a bubble-gum colored keeppcase with "hipper than Austin Powers" hyperbole, which may be commercially convenient but is neither accurate nor apt. Filmed in 1965, **OUR MAN FLINT** is a product of the "go go" era, which preceded the Pop Art and psychedelia moviemaking styles co-opted by **AUSTIN POWERS: INTERNATIONAL MAN OF MYSTERY**. It's not **MODESTY BLAISE**; it's like a MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E. feature with a more formidable hero, sharper writing, and a more sumptuous budget, though it is sometimes dressed in conspicuous hand-me-downs from earlier Fox movies and television shows. (Galaxy's HQ set sports some purple membranous window-dressing inherited from **FANTASTIC VOYAGE**, in production at Fox at the same time, and the submarine interiors in the opening scenes are familiar from **THE FLY**, **VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA** and **THE TIME TUNNEL**.) Director Daniel Mann (**THE ROSE TATTOO**, **BUTTERFIELD 8**), flanked by DP Daniel L. Fapp (**WEST SIDE STORY**), stages the film with a minimum of references to anything trendy, apart from the pseudo-LOST IN SPACE trappings of Galaxy's hypno



IN LIKE FLINT: Our hero astounds ZOWIE chief Lee J. Cobb by demonstrating just one capability of his fountain pen, which is equipped with its own microscope!

chambers and Flint's all-too-brief watusi through their discotheque "reward room." Jerry Goldsmith's score is essentially the same piece of music translated into a dozen different *milieux*, including a main titles spy theme, Italian and French flavored variations when on location, a tango, a stripper's bump 'n' grind (one of those Marseilles strippers is **FASTER, PUSSYCAT! KILL! KILL!**'s Tura Satana), and even a darkly sighing Herrmannesque arrangement (heard after Gila's seduction of Flint). In terms of story, originality, and satisfying resolution, **OUR MAN FLINT** is the more consistent of the two Flint films, but Mann allowed some rough edges to survive the final cut; at 9:19, for instance, Cobb actually refers to Coburn's character as "Clint."

The follow-up, **IN LIKE FLINT** (whose title is a play on "In Like Flynn," a risqué '40s phrase acknowledging actor Errol Flynn's legendary luck with women), pits our hero against an organization of influential women (led by **BEDLAM**'s Anna Lee, and seemingly inspired by Sax Rohmer's Sumuru novels) operating under cover of Fabulous Face, a makeover salon based in the Virgin Islands. Their plan is to hire male flunkies to infiltrate the US space program and government on their behalf, thus allowing them to seize control of the nation from above and within. In a page borrowed from the 1963 **OUTER LIMITS** episode "The Hundred Days of the Dragon," an actor in

their employ remodels his face to double that of US President Trent (Andrew Duggan) and is substituted for the real Commander in Chief during his golf game with Lloyd Kramden (Cobb again). The switcheroo, performed during a gas-induced blackout, takes place while Kramden is timing the President's golf swing; when the swing comes in at three minutes, the perplexed Kramden consults Derek Flint—who is busy learning new ways to communicate with dolphins (he is, we learn, the author of a Dolphin Language Dictionary "already out of date"). He demurs from accepting the case until his return from a week of survival training in the desert—but during their meeting, Flint's current blonde, brunette and redhead roommates are persuaded by saleslady Lisa (Jean Hale, actually an FF exec in the first of many disguises) to accept a week's retreat at Fabulous Face, where they can await Flint's return under hairdryers that, unbeknownst to them, offer "brain and hair washing at the same time." When Kramden loses his position at ZOWIE after being disreputed in a FF-fabricated sex scandal, Flint is summoned back—in mid-parachute jump!—to crack the case, which boggles even his capacious mind ("An actor as President?").

The packaging of **IN LIKE FLINT** (in a banana-colored keepcase) carries a curious recommendation: "My Favorite Movie"—Austin Powers." Whether this is a real opinion expressed somewhere by Mike Myers, in an Austin Powers film, or

just a gag blurb from a fictional character owned by Fox, we don't know, but **IN LIKE FLINT** is neither substantially better or worse than its predecessor. It has some redundant qualities (another world domination scheme concealed behind another cosmetics *façade*), but Coburn inhabits Flint more completely the second time around, and rules over his given universe with a greater sense of fun. Released in March 1967, just before the Summer of Love, there are again no overt references to psychedelia, but the whole film is possessed of a wackier, acid-tinged sense of humor. (Note the scene where Flint hides in plain sight by standing and pointing in front of a billboard exclaiming "ZOWIE Wants You!") Under the able direction of Gordon Douglas (**ZOMBIES ON BROADWAY, THEM!, CALL ME BWANA**), the film features some exceptional work by Cobb (whose acting in the restaurant scene with Hale and in the office where he explains to Coburn how he was romantically duped is exemplary, equal to his fine work in **THE EXORCIST**); a memorable smoochathon between Flint and a frenetically frugging Russian ballerina (Yvonne Craig, who—forget Batgirl!—is as sexy here as she was in **THE GENE KRUPA STORY**); and is a well-balanced banquet of satire, action and verbal wit that boils conveniently down to the truism "Make Love, Not War."

This pageant of pretty faces, shapely figures, and "What Kind of Man Reads PLAYBOY?" art direction is filmed in ebullient widescreen by *maestro di Garbo* William Daniels; his talent for lighting scenes of intrigue (as in **BRUTE FORCE**, **NAKED CITY** and **SOME CAME RUNNING**) is also

apparent, particularly in Flint's rooftop escape amid the minarets of Moscow and his derring-do in the computer rooms at Fabulous Face, which are again well-stocked with equipment inherited from various Irwin Allen shows. Some people prefer **OUR MAN FLINT** to its sequel, which may be due to the way Daniels de-emphasizes performance in his compositions, focusing on long and medium shots to squeeze out maximum production value from the lavish sets, and some delicious Russian and space vista matte paintings by L.B. Abbott and Art Cruickshank, at the expense of actor-flattering closeups. In its complex uses of color and shadow, nowhere else better than in the scene of Flint swimming his way into a sauna at Fabulous Face HQ, **IN LIKE FLINT** is altogether more the work of a great cinematographer. It also takes Flint into outer space, a few months before 007 got there in **YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE**, released the following summer. The end credits play over a Jerry Goldsmith song that somehow failed to attract Oscar consideration, "Your Zowie Face."

In recent years, the Flint films have been shown a lot on American Movie Classics, but—especially now that AMC has begun peppering their programming with commercials and reneging on wide-screen broadcasts—they are well worth acquiring on DVD, especially given their budget pricing. Seen cropped on TV, both become pan&scan nightmares, but on these anamorphically enhanced discs, one can fully appreciate what elegant advantage they took of their CinemaScope framing (how else can you see Flint surrounded by all four of his adoring companions?), as well as

After a triumphant night together on the Moscow stage, Flint celebrates with duplicitous ballerina Natasha (Yvonne Craig).





Not only does Flint beat 007 into outer space, he also commandeers the first anti-gravity threesome!

their original lustre and excitement. **OUR MAN FLINT** is letterboxed at 2.32:1 and offers a more muted color scheme than its sequel, but one is knocked-out by how much it gains on a large screen; no matter how good the miniature effects may be, for example, on a small TV—especially in a cropped presentation—they *look* miniature. The presentation is 99.9% perfect; we noticed a hairline scratch at 56:26, lasting a little longer than a blink, but that is literally the extent of the “damage.” Viewed in 16:9, the images take on an impressive sense of depth, not only in the effects shots, but in action scenes of Flint disabling opponents with kung fu in a large private gym and low angle shots of him hurling pursuers off of high girders. The Dolby mono track is consistently involving. An alternate French track is included, as are subtitle options in English and Spanish and 16 chapter marks. Theatrical trailers are included for **FATHOM**, **MODESTY BLAISE** and both Flint films. The one for **OUR MAN FLINT** itself is a mildly worn 3m 16s spot which includes a number of alternate angles, unused takes, and even a glimpse of Flint in a fencing match that was ultimately omitted from the final cut.

IN LIKE FLINT, which is spread over 24 chapters, also looks astonishingly good—and slightly sharper, for reasons that may be due to its brighter overall look and then-recent innovations in filmstock. The same quality audio/subtitle options and trailers are included, and the one for the main feature (only 53s long) describes Jean Hale with Garboesque hard-sell as “the fabulous face that

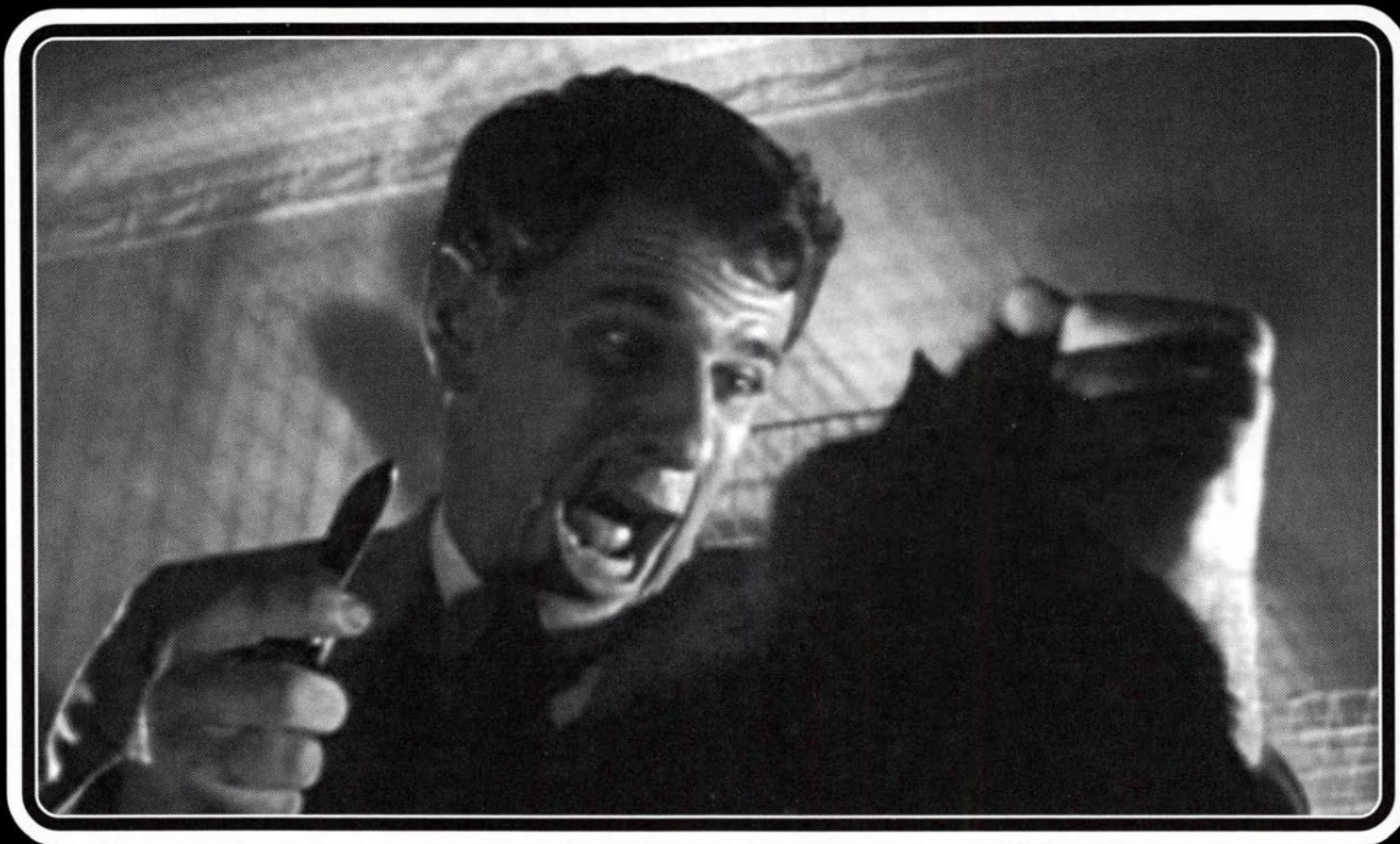
launched a thousand intrigues.” (Hale, who debuted in Richard Hilliard’s 1964 **PSYCHOMANIA** was subsequently cast in Roger Corman film **THE ST. VALENTINE’S DAY MASSACRE** for Fox, then disappeared from the screen for 20 years, later resurfacing in a couple of early ’90s TV movies.)

The continuing value of the Flint movies lies precisely in their humanistic values, which are in significant contrast to those of the 007 series. James Bond is about the pleasure of taking—taking charge, taking women, taking lives, even one’s own, into one’s hands; James Bond is about doing as you please, within the boundaries of what you’ve been told to do. When Roger Moore replaced Sean Connery in the Bond films, the Bond films aspired to recapture the frothiness of the Flint films, but left their central philosophy, and saving grace, out of the recipe. In a “love it or leave it” America, Flint loves his country—he’s fought for it, he chooses to live in it—but he’s too vigilant and well-informed to obey it blindly; the interests of government always come second to those of the one-man country that is himself. Flint may have lasted for only two pictures (and a 1970s TV movie, starring **LUCKY THE INSCRUTABLE**’s Ray Danton, that is better left forgotten), but as these DVDs prove, Derek Flint still lives.

Thanks to James Coburn, the adventures of this thinking man’s man of action remain relevant, and are perhaps more relevant today than ever—certainly as entertainment, but also as a tribute to the importance, the triumph, and the irresistible charm of the individual.



DVDs



*Robert Frost can't stand the kitty in Harold Hoffman's contemporary (1966) telling of Edgar Allan Poe's **THE BLACK CAT**.*

THE BLACK CAT / THE FAT BLACK PUSSYCAT

1965/1963, *Something Weird*
Video, DD-1.0/LB/+, \$24.95,
73m 8s/88m 51s, DVD-0

Both titles comprising this "Killer Kitty Double Feature" invoke a spectral feline to symbolize the divided soul of modern man. Crassly conceived and crudely executed, these films nonetheless retain value as artifacts betraying a societal cynicism evident well before America's involvement in Vietnam took blame for dividing the country. A sense of post-Camelot malaise haunts Harold

Hoffman's **THE BLACK CAT** (1965), an updating of the 1843 short story by Edgar Allan Poe. On the surface, newlywed Texans Lew (Robert Frost) and Diana (Robyn Baker) are fitting heirs to the legacy of Jack and Jackie; with his broad shoulders and boyish fetlock, Lew cuts a distinctly Kennedyesque figure, but is hobbled by delusions and dark urges compelling him to destroy those things he loves. With a rage incubated between hatred for his father and love (most likely inappropriate) for an enabling mother, Lew may have been inspired by **PSYCHO**'s Norman Bates, but the explosive sequelae of his misplaced anger

anticipated (albeit on a smaller scale) the true crimes committed by Charles Whitman in Austin, Texas, in 1966 (events that inspired Peter Bogdonovich's **TARGETS**), a string of killings that began with Whitman's own beloved mother and young bride.

In his review [VW 37:11] of SWV's earlier VHS release of **THE BLACK CAT**, Tim Lucas observed that "it's not a good movie, but it is an interesting one"—an apt assessment. While the means at the disposal of writer-director Harold Hoffman were clearly insufficient to actualize the ambition of his adaptation (which does have the distinction of being the most

faithful to Poe), the final product is oddly well-served by the limitations of its cast. Both amateur leads seem to have been chosen for superficial good looks that fail the test of the extreme close up, making Lew (Robert Frost resembles the actor Richard Kiel, minus the gigantism) and Diana (an adenoidal mouth-breather with soup can curls) come off a bit insipid—which hardly qualifies them as poster children for the Great Society. In other words, if Hoffman's actors were any better, **THE BLACK CAT** wouldn't work at all, and the film does achieve its limited goals as a gore flick with delusions of grandeur. Hoffman displays a ready wit, kitting out a dive bar band with eye patches to goose Lew's guilt for blinding the family cat and trucking in absurdly optimistic library music to accompany Lew's discharge from a sanitarium, where he has learned to parrot just enough trendy psychobabble ("The only real demons are those within us") to ensure an early release. Denied cost prohibitive Gothic trappings, **THE BLACK CAT** honors the spirit of its source by removing it from the comfy context of a period piece.

Don't be put off by **THE BLACK CAT**'s scratchy opening frames (which are also beset with the SWV watermark), as this letterboxed (at 1.85:1) transfer is in exceedingly good shape. Taken from a positive print, the B&W transfer is sharp, with bottomless blacks (especially in the setpiece in which Lew hangs—and electrocutes!—the eponymous pussy with the extension cord from a coffee percolator). The mono sound is limited but serviceable and noise-free, which is impressive for a film that was effectively lost for a number of years. SWV has only afforded the film 8 chapters.

Shot in and around Greenwich Village late in 1962, Harold Lea's **THE FAT BLACK PUSSY-CAT** was intended as a cheapjack satire of the then-fashionable Bohemian youth movement, disguised as a DRAGNET-style police procedural. The brutal street slashing of a carefree young woman (which comes close to predicting the infamous Catherine "Kitty" Genovese murder case of 1964) focuses police attention on New York's "Beatnik" scene, with its nexus at MacDougal Street's Fat Black Pussycat Café and Theatre. As the bodies of young women pile up, Detective Dave Walsh (TV actor Frank Jamus) and "egghead anthropologist" Janet Lynd (Janet Damon) team up to stop the killer before he (or she) strikes again—and in so doing, make themselves targets for terror.

Conceived by writer-director Harold Lea as an amused take on the mad, mad, mad, mad world of 1962 (then in the apocalyptic grip of the Cuban Missile Crisis), **THE FAT BLACK PUSSY-CAT** makes for inessential but interesting watching 40 years on. The film is ham-fisted and much too impressed with itself, but Lea was onto something intriguing with his view of social conditioning and the egocentric callousness of even those committed to saving the world ("I heard she got attacked by a sex fiend—ain't that a laugh?"). A boxoffice non-starter, **THE FAT BLACK PUSSY-CAT** was acquired by Cinema Distributors of America, who released it in August 1964 with whole segments scrapped in favor of new footage shot by CDA frontman Michael A. Ripps (who had similarly retro-fitted the United Artists bomb **BAYOU** into the grindhouse sensation **POOR WHITE TRASH** just a few years earlier). Ripps literalized the title creature, making it a

perambulatory telepath who appears after each murder ("Find the cat, catch the killer"). Ripps also made the film gorier (a fire escape double homicide underscored with an Indian *raga*) and added inserts of the killer's menacing black-gloved hands (the same year as Mario Bava's **BLOOD AND BLACK LACE**). While the original film benefits—at least in hindsight—from the chance casting of such new talent as Geoffrey Lewis (**THUNDERBOLT AND LIGHTFOOT**), Leonard Frey (**THE BOYS IN THE BAND**) and Hugh Romney (better known from **WOODSTOCK** on as "Wavy Gravy"), Ripps' new footage boasts an anonymous turn by a 22-year-old Malcolm "Mac" Rebennack (aka Dr. John, the Night Tripper) as a dazed dooper who finds himself in the right place at the wrong time. (SWV includes a snippet of Rebennack's droll *patois* as an easily-found Easter egg on the disc's main screen.)

If Ripps made **THE FAT BLACK PUSSYCAT** punchier and more violent (a climactic throat slitting still shocks with its arbitrary viciousness), he was nobody's idea of a filmmaker. Most of his new scenes are drab in the Ed Wood mode, harshly lit and lacking in essential set dressing (the Police Commissioner doesn't even have pencils in his pencil holder). The newer segments are badly integrated into the original film, often throwing off the fluidity of cinematographer Bart Carroll's prowling camerawork. While Lea's original cut is likely lost, Something Weird has been able to include the excised scenes as bonus features on this disc, amounting to 20+ minutes of long-unseen material. The most valuable of these inclusions are original murder scenes replaced by Ripps (some of which include flashes



A curiously giallo-like shot from THE FAT BLACK PUSSYCAT.

of nudity and sexual situations consisting of implied fellatio and cunnilingus), an extended dinner party sequence (featuring actor Hector Elizondo, 10 years before his big break as the difficult "Mr. Grey" of **THE TAKING OF PELHAM 1-2-3**) in which Detective Dave is informed that he only likes steak because he has been conditioned to, and a climactic showdown in Frontier Town, an abandoned up-state amusement park. As is the case with its co-feature on this disc, **THE FAT BLACK PUSSYCAT** looks astonishingly crisp, with strong contrasts and a silvery lustre to its original materials (some shots appear optically enlarged, boosting the degree of grain from time to time). The film is presented full

frame and has been given 11 chapters.

Something Weird has rounded out this disc's "kitty litter" of extras with the B&W striptease short "Margie LaMont: The Cat Girl" (3m 4s) and trailers for the two features, along with previews (many of which feature a shocking degree of frontal nudity) of such like-titled but disparate films as the Swedish language love-in-the-laundry soap **THE CATS**, the British sex farce **THE TOM-CAT**, the West German kiddie flick **PUSS 'N BOOTS**, and Mitam Productions' **THE HOUSE OF CATS** ("If you embarrass easily, this is the picture for you!"). SWV's trademark "Gallery of Horror Drive-In Exploitation Art" features some choice posters, ad mats and lobby cards (including

several Paul Naschy vehicles and a particularly impressive one-sheet for **THE DEVIL AND LEROY BASSETT**), accompanied by a 5m 45s assortment of "Horrorama Radio-Spot Rarities." Frank Henenlotter's liner notes are exclusive to **THE FAT BLACK PUSSYCAT**'s complicated production history, but make for entertaining reading. —Richard Harland Smith

CARNIVAL OF BLOOD / CURSE OF THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN

*1970/1972, Something Weird
Video, DD-1.0/+, \$24.98,
88m 48s/80m 28s, DVD-0*

Low-to-no-budget writer/producer/director Leonard Kirtman was responsible for both halves

of this early '70s grindhouse double bill. While the bottom-tiered item has been all but forgotten, **CARNIVAL OF BLOOD** has clung to the fringes of fan consciousness by virtue of an unpredictable stroke of casting luck in the person of a pre-**GOD-FATHER** Burt Young. Both films have been preserved in all their ratty glory on this Something Weird DVD release, which serves as an authentic time capsule of a theatrical experience whose like we will not see again.

CARNIVAL OF BLOOD has been available on home video since the infancy of the medium; a condensed version of the original Wizard Video tape release was even a featured segment of the Elvira-hosted compilation **FILMGORE** (released by Wizard's sister label, Force Video). The "carnival" in question is in fact New York's Coney Island, where a succession of nagging, obnoxious women (usually accompanied by meek, submissive husbands) have been meeting grisly, H.G. Lewis-style ends. A visit to the fortune teller portends disaster; a stop at a "pop the balloon" dart game eventually results in proprietor Tom (Earl Edgerton) giving a woman a prize she hasn't earned just to shut her up and move her along; Tom's hunchbacked assistant Gimpy ("John Harris," subsequently known as Burt Young) complains about the treatment Tom has just received; and soon afterwards, the killer strikes. Investigating the crimes is Dan (Martin Barolsky), who's involved in a "fight-and-make-up" relationship with fiancée Laura (Judith Resnick), a young woman for whom Tom has protective feelings of his own. Will the case be solved before Laura

comes face to face with the killer herself? Of course not.

As a mystery, **CARNIVAL OF BLOOD** falls completely flat. So much emphasis is spent trying to incriminate one character that we know we can safely write him off, leaving the true killer's identity rather glaringly obvious. As a thriller, it's no improvement; while the gritty reality of Coney Island at night is an admitted plus, the threadbare production values cause the exact same crowd to gather in front of the "Dragon Cave" (spook house) ride over two separate evenings and limit the shocks to three attempts at extreme gore (a beheading, a disembowelment and an eye-gouging). The bulk of the film consists of interminable conversations (the Dan and Laura soap opera is one thing, but Tom and his sidekick have a slightly more off-the-wall chat about the significance of the name "Gimpy" during a visit to the former's home), carnival montages set to some truly horrid songs, and the workings of the balloon game. What keeps it from being completely dismissable is Kirtman's obvious determination to make a psycho thriller to reckon with—the strange evidence of which is apparent throughout.

The opening titles, which appear at intervals during the prologue, are accompanied by a disembodied female head (the old "black velvet" effect) which chatters angrily at the viewer throughout. Though Laura is kept on hand in an attempt to deflect charges of misogyny, the victims are so abrasive that one may be tempted to offer the killer some sympathy (the film's clear intention): in particular, one plump, fright-wigged matron with huge green sunglasses is genuinely,

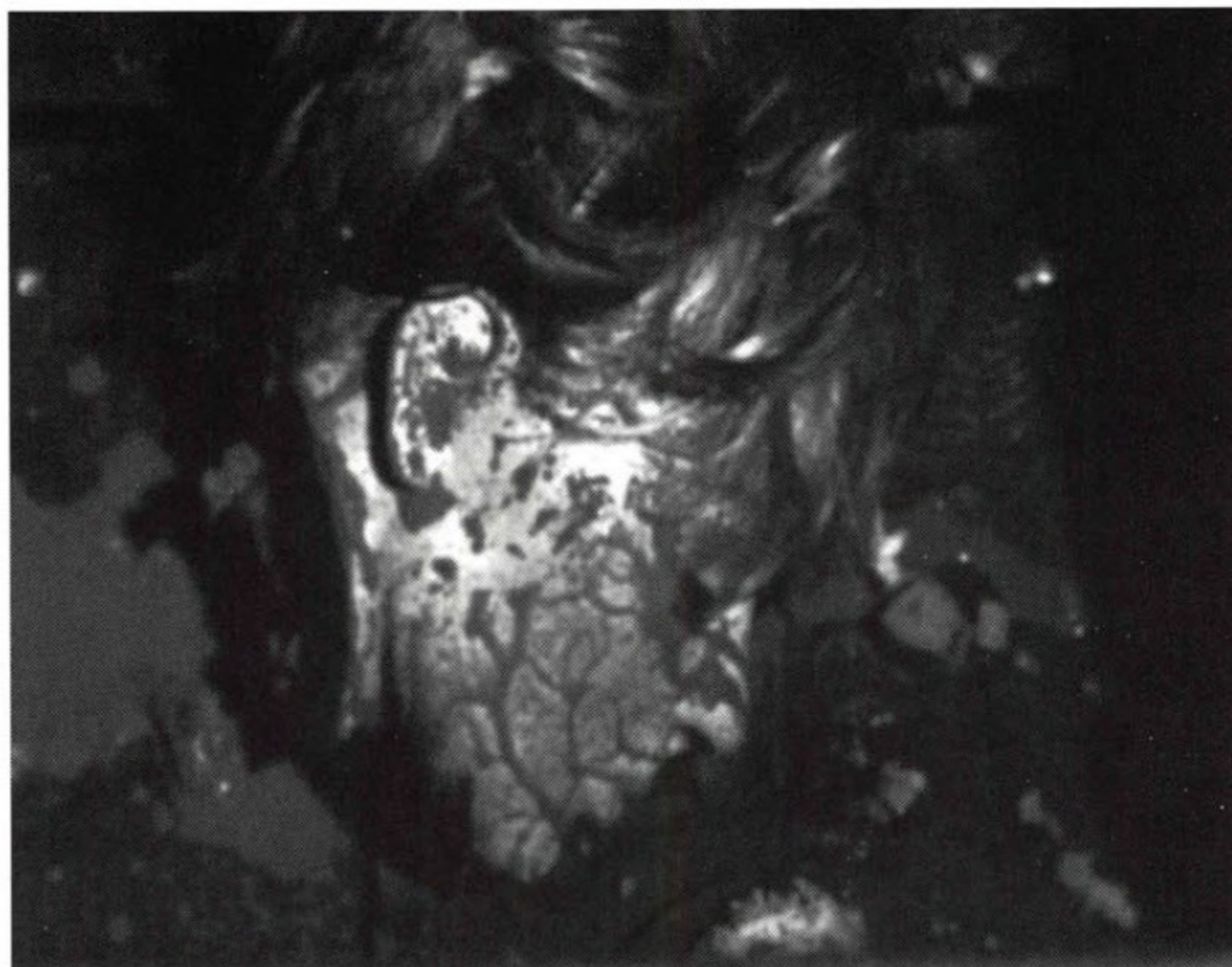
unforgettably horrifying! An effectively nasty surprise turns up inside a stuffed animal, and finally, the killer is indulged with a mini *tour de force* near the end of the film as he relives his childhood trauma while alone in his room, reciting his lines and miming his actions as the voices of his past are heard on the soundtrack. Had the rest of the film been equal to this sequence, Kirtman might have had something; unfortunately, that was nowhere near the case. So **CARNIVAL** fails, but not for lack of trying.

As speckly and scratchy as SWV's print may be, this is probably as good as **CARNIVAL OF BLOOD** ever looked—on home video, anyway. The colors are strong, while the mono sound (including some poorly post-synched dialogue) comes across clearly, and the fullscreen transfer doesn't seem to cry out for letterboxing. Twelve chapters have been assigned to the feature and the menu itself is decked-out in carnyspeak; the options "Play Movie" and "View Chapters" are given here as "Step Right Up" and "Find Gimpy."

Two years after **CARNIVAL OF BLOOD**, Leonard Kirtman struck back under the name "John Kirkland," doing the directing honors for writer/producer Kevin Riche's **CURSE OF THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN**, which (surprise) is not a Washington Irving pastiche of any description. While the feature will be the fresher discovery to most viewers (the Cult Video incarnation having been deleted almost 20 years ago), it rides in a few lengths behind its predecessor, though points of specialized interest remain. Marland Proctor stars as Mark Callahan, a medical student who inherits a Wild

West tourist attraction from his late uncle on the condition that he makes it turn a profit within an allotted time. Mark accepts the challenge, believing that at the very least he'll soon be able to afford to marry his fiancée Brenda (Claudia Ream). While Mark populates the park with his improv-theatre/hippie friends, caretaker Solomon (B.G. Fisher) comes with the package, delivering an ominous warning about the curse hanging over the attraction. Solomon claims that the vengeful spirit of a betrayed gun-fighter is lying in wait for anyone foolish enough to occupy the property. Of course, no one takes him seriously, but it isn't long before one of the actors is splashed with blood from a severed head carried by an otherwise cranially-disadvantaged figure on horseback. Things soon get even more serious: a near-fatality occurs when live ammo is substituted for blanks in a prop pistol, and the phantom Horseman's return visits ultimately prove deadly. Are supernatural forces at work—or is someone using local superstition for personal gain?

A sizable early portion of the film is given over to the entertainments staged by the acting troupe; whether this was deliberate padding, or a concession made for their participation in the rest of the film, the stultifying effect is the same—particularly when we're subjected to the exact same "pot smoking cops" sketch recently seen in **BILLY JACK** (1971)! The dialogue continues to mark time throughout, while remembering to touch on what crucial plot points there are. No doubt anticipating the probable audience reaction to such a talky, action-free film, Kirtman tries to inject an air of deliberate surrealism. An offscreen narrator offers echo-chamber



*Step right up! Get your head lopped off
at the CARNIVAL OF BLOOD!*

commentary throughout ("Watch everyone, Mark!"), one of the Horseman's victims is stalked while under the influence of LSD, and prominently-billed Warhol Factory actress Ultra Violet shows up as a rich tourist (with a Superman lunchbox) who makes an offer to buy the park herself. By the time the story (at its heart, truly no more than a particularly mean-spirited SCOOBY-DOO episode) stumbles to its conclusion, its most frightening aspect is the narrator's repeated closing threat: "It will begin again! It will begin again!" **CURSE OF THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN** is presented in the same tatty-but-watchable condition as its co-feature. Viewers may either "Watch Your Head" or "Choose Your Hippie Nightmare" from the 12 available chapters.

As usual, SWV has embellished this disc with plenty of extras. There are two TV spots for the theatrical double-feature itself, which incredibly proclaim that the package is rated PG—while that's fitting enough for

CURSE, CARNIVAL would have to be shown in heavily truncated form for this rating to be accurate. In any event, the Adults-Only "Easter Egg" trailer for **CARNY GIRL** would prevent this disc from ever getting a PG of its own. Trailers are also provided for **ASYLUM OF SATAN**, **CRYPT OF DARK SECRETS**, **THE DEAD ONE**, **HOUSE OF EXORCISM** (a raving on-screen announcer insists that no actual footage from the film can be shown to the audience); **HUNCHBACK OF THE MORGUE** (a film that most sources insist was never released in America is advertised here as a 1973 offering from Cinemation!); **SHE-FREAK**, **THREE ON A MEATHOOK** (a different spot than that found on the **MAD RON'S PREVIEWS FROM HELL** compilation tape but one that still strives to be "poetic") and **WEREWOLVES ON WHEELS**. 1937's "Carnival Show" is a vintage "Pictoreel" short subject (9m 37s) in which a carnival barker promises all sorts of thrills that we don't actually get to see—but several musical numbers are

provided for our entertainment in the meantime. 5m 42s worth of "exploitation art" is accompanied by radio spots for such items as Mexican horror double-bills and live spook shows, including **MONSTERS CRASH THE PAJAMA PARTY**.

Lastly, two "Horror Home Productions" are given wide release for the first time anywhere. **THE HUNCHBACK OF MASSA-PEQUA PARK** (5m 40s) stalks his suburban victims (for no particular reason), one of whom is jammed into a large garbage bag to be picked up by the local sanitation department in an amusing highlight. 1981's **HANDS OF JUSTICE** (6m 33s, credited to Mike A. Ruggiero) is an incredibly vicious revenge fantasy in which the protagonist uses up buckets of backyard gore while pondering the most appropriate payoff for his recent mugger. If this one played as a school project today, several phone calls would result. Frankly, the two Kirtman films featured here don't

rise too many levels above these home movies. But play theaters they did, in circumstances that can't be duplicated today—only represented on DVD double features like this one. Most entertainment seekers will want to look elsewhere, but those wanting to learn as much about the genre and its history as they can will find this a helpful illustration of '70s drive-in exploitation. —Shane M. Dallmann

DRACULA THE DIRTY OLD MAN / GUESS WHAT HAPPENED TO COUNT DRACULA?

1969/1970, *Something Weird Video*, DD-2.0/+, \$24.99, 68m 51s/72m 51s, DVD-1

This *Something Weird* "Double Feature Special Edition" (which also carries the "Chiller Theatre" logo) offers temptations galore to fans of Dracula arcana and vampire erotica. It's not that the films themselves are so great, but that the entire package offers a

core sampling of the changes unleashed in the vampire subgenre after the founding of the MPAA rating system, when the ideas previously restricted to subtext brimmed forth into saucy explicitude.

We first reviewed William Edwards' **DRACULA (THE DIRTY OLD MAN)**—as its title appears onscreen—way back in VW 12:9; a sexed-up retread of **RETURN OF THE VAMPIRE** and **THE RETURN OF DRACULA**, it finds Dracula (Vince Kelley) working out of a mine shaft and enslaving a reporter (Libby Caculus, who looks like a male lead from one of the early '60s K. Gordon Murray Mexi-horrors), whom he transforms into a werewolf. It is then incumbent upon the lycanthrope to bring his master three female victims, whose blood he must consume before returning to hibernation. After making good on his obligation, the werewolf is rewarded with the promise of a woman for himself. He brings his own former girlfriend Ann (Ann Hollis) to the cave, where her good looks stir up a violent rivalry between the two monsters. Evidently filmed seriously, the movie turned out so wretchedly that someone (probably producer Whit Boyd) opted to scrap the soundtrack and redub the entire picture jokily, with nearly all the dialogue provided by an uncredited actor who gives Dracula a sub-Jackie Mason accent ("I'm gonna give you a kiss like you wouldn't believe... right here in your good place!"). Dracula is renamed Alucard, the werewolf is called Irving Jackalman, and the yucks are often either bathroom-related or ungallantly critical of the nude abductees' lack of endowment, once stripped. There is one extended sequence, lasting from

Actors at a Wild West tourist attraction are splashed with the blood of a decapitation in CURSE OF THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN.





DRACULA THE DIRTY OLD MAN goes batty over naked bodies!

45:00 to 51:02, of a 20ish girl making out with a 40ish man, who abandons her to be mauled by Jackalman, which is presented with the original live sound intact; it's also in the worst condition of all the footage. The makeup is courtesy of Tony Tierney (Al Adamson's **DRACULA VS. FRANKENSTEIN**), whose Jackalman we previously described as looking like a toupée fished out of a toilet; today, it reminds us of the Big Bad Wolf mask from the Mexican "Little Red Riding Hood" movies, as it might look after being fished out of a toilet.

The print is in decent condition, with a constant but unobtrusive veneer of wear that keeps one in mind of the picture's grindhouse heritage. The nice thing about the transfer is that, although the disc itself is not 16:9 enhanced, **DRACULA (THE DIRTY OLD MAN)** was filmed full-aperture for soft-matte 1.85 projection; therefore, it can be

viewed in Zoom mode with no conspicuous loss, and the tighter framing actually improves the quality of the compositions, such as they are. The 2.0 mono sound is acceptable, though the non-stop cocktail lounge jazz accompaniment may well send you off your nut.

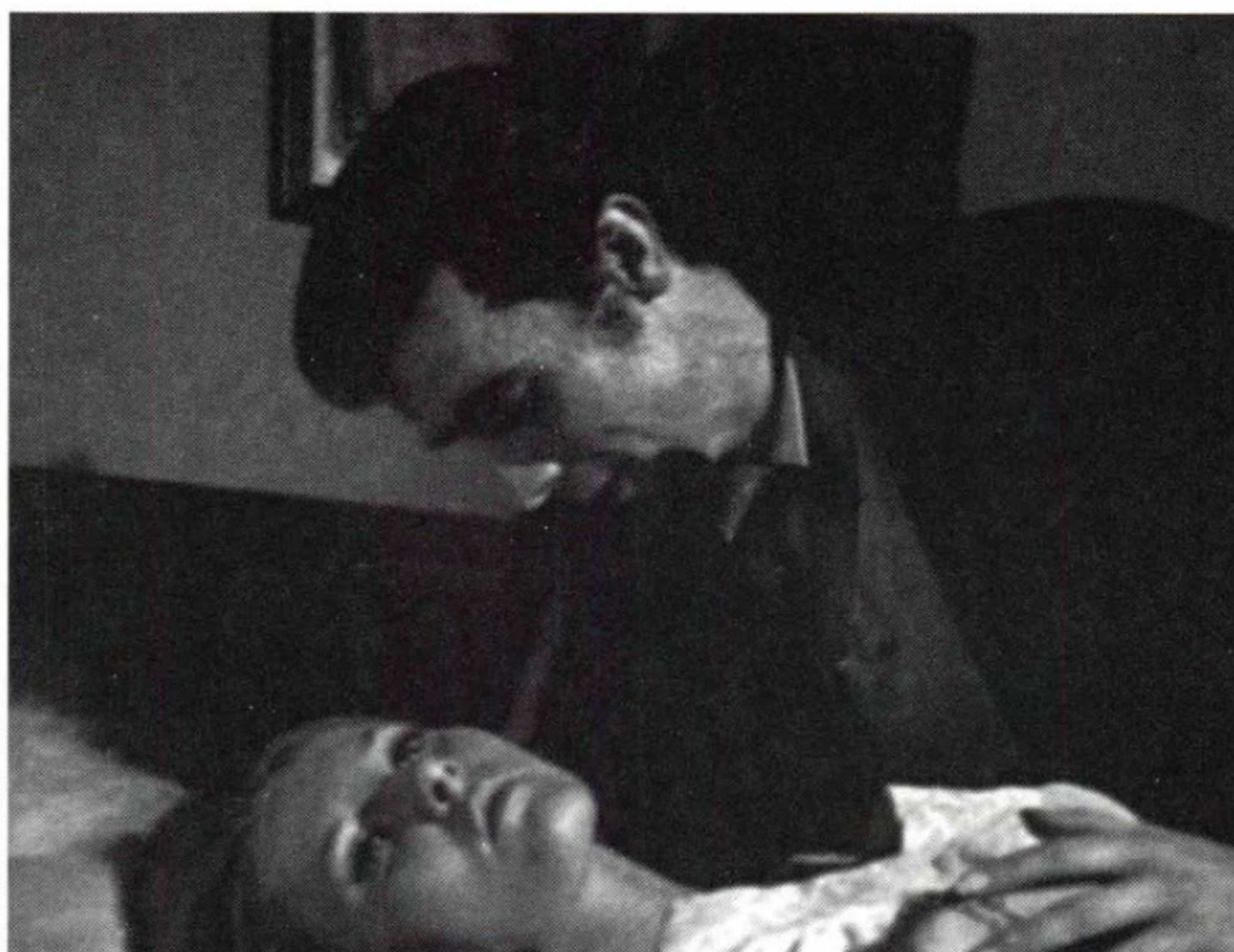
Laurence Merrick's **GUESS WHAT HAPPENED TO COUNT DRACULA?** was reportedly produced simultaneously in GP and R-rated versions (the latter with an additional orgy scene) and originated as a 1969 gay porn project variously known as **DRACULA AND THE BOYS** and **DOES DRACULA REALLY SUCK?**. Even more interesting than its checkered past is that its plot closely parallels that of Bob Kelljan's **COUNT YORGA, VAMPIRE** (1970), which was produced at roughly the same time and was also a GP distillation of an adult film project. Two dating actors, Guy (John Landon) and Angelica (Claudia Barron),

are perfectly happy together until they encounter goatee'd Count Adrian (Des Roberts, who also composed the score), the true son of Dracula, who owns the hot new LA restaurant, Dracula's Dungeon. After sending Guy home at the end of their date, Angelica is visited by some friends who decide to throw an orgy at her place unannounced, and bring along the Count, who notices her interest in vampirism (she's reading **VAMPIR—LEGEND AND FACT**, a book which he has read "in the original Slavic"). She complains of a headache, and he cures her with hypnotism, planting a post-hypnotic suggestion that she should excuse her friends and welcome him later into her bedroom. The next day, Angelica notices two small wounds on her throat, consults Dr. Harris (Robert Branche, who notes her loss of blood and jokes about vampirism), and soon after develops an appetite for raw steak. In time, Guy and Dr. Harris—concerned for Angelica's well-being—pursue her to Dracula's Dungeon and find themselves up against their worst fears. Even the finale mirrors **COUNT YORGA, VAMPIRE**, as a newly vampirized Angelica rushes the camera with fanged mouth hissing, and there is also a surprise element carried over from **ROSEMARY'S BABY** (1968), to which the hero's name may offer a clue.

Des Roberts—who plays the Count à la Lugosi, wears a cool bat-lensed monocle, and has a pet tiger named Alucard—surprised us by being rather likeable, and his score is fairly diverse, combining everything from music boxes and fuzz bass to romantic piano themes and tapes played psychedelically in reverse. Like his heavy-on-the-garlic

performance, **GUESS WHAT HAPPENED TO COUNT DRACULA?** isn't exactly good, but it is strangely appealing. Shot in part at Hollywood's landmark The Magic Castle, the film's most compelling aspect is the cinematography of Robert Caramico, who also shot **ORGY OF THE DEAD**, **LEMORA THE LADY DRACULA**, **BLACKENSTEIN**, and Tobe Hooper's **EATEN ALIVE**, among others; he drenches nearly every shot in garish color gel lighting, clashing blue/red, yellow/green, purple/green, yellow/red, and sometimes sandwiching two gels together (to produce, for example, the nauseous green-yellow of Angelica's morning-after aversion to sunlight)—not to produce a psychological or painterly result à la Mario Bava, but to cultivate a Halloweenish atmosphere. The supporting performances are non-descript at best, with Barron a not especially appealing heroine (when she gushes about wanting to be a star, try to suppress the thought "Good luck!"), and the budget apparently did not run to providing a hunch for the bent-over actor credited as "Hunchback." Writer-director Laurence Merrick later reused Roberts in his biker film **THE BLACK ANGELS** (1970), and went on to co-direct the 1972 documentary **MANSON**.

Presented in its innocuous GP (or PG) version, **GUESS WHAT HAPPENED TO COUNT DRACULA?** looks better than its co-feature, being more professionally photographed, but despite being open-apertured, it does not adapt quite as well to zoomed viewing; it was likely meant to be soft-matted to 1.66:1. The bizarre colors are prominent and skintones, when you can get to them,



Des Roberts as Count Adrian, writer-director Laurence Merrick's answer to the age-old question, GUESS WHAT HAPPENED TO COUNT DRACULA?

look natural. There are enough speckles and scratches to confirm that no DVNR was employed, but the signs of age and experience are not distracting. At 24:16, the shadow of a moth flits around the picture for about 4s, which only adds to the drive-in atmosphere. The mono audio is okay.

The packaging of this DVD notes that **DRACULA (THE DIRTY OLD MAN)** is unrated and that **GWHTCD** is rated PG—but neither fact prepared us for the startling menu screen illustrations, which include a shot of John Holmes' endowment (cradled in a skeleton's hand) on the main menu, and bare, thrusting male buttocks on the supplement menu page. The supplements include a gratifying array of vampire-themed trailers, mostly from the early '70s: **BLOOD SUCKERS**, **THE BODY BENEATH**, **CAGED VIRGINS**, **DAUGHTERS OF DARKNESS**, **THE LEGEND OF BLOOD CASTLE**, **A TASTE OF BLOOD**,

THE VAMPIRE AND THE BALLERINA and **THE VAMPIRE'S COFFIN/THE ROBOT VS. THE AZTEC MUMMY**. All of these are fun to watch, but the real discovery of the bunch is the trailer for Jorge Grau's Elizabeth Bathory film **THE LEGEND OF BLOOD CASTLE** [*Ceremonia Sangrienta*, 1973], which includes shots of gore and nudity cut from its US theatrical release, and makes one pine all the more for a restored DVD release of this worthy, elusive title. A gallery of pressbook covers and ad slicks, accompanied by radio spots, is not vampire-specific but seems to concentrate, above all, on vintage drive-in potboilers about teenage promiscuity and pregnancy, and birth-of-a-baby melodramas. Also included is a rocking cover version of the song "Shanty Tramp" by The Dead Elvi.

The biggest supplements, or at least the longest, are two



Mark Lester (in the backseat) and Susan George star in *EYEWITNESS*, an unacknowledged update of the Cornell Woolrich-based thriller *THE WINDOW*.

Adults Only featurettes reprising the Dracula theme. The aforementioned John Holmes stars as "Count Spatula" in *SEX AND THE SINGLE VAMPIRE* (26m 22s), in which the Count's abode is invaded by Rod Rammer, Lance Slot and their lady friends for a night of pleasure. Holmes does unveil himself, as do the other cast members (we use that term advisedly), but no one visibly rises to the occasion. Directed by "Modunk Phreezer" and edited by "Phil Meditor," and with sound by "Alucard," it's no more than a curiosity. Rounding out the package is the less curious *DRACULA AND THE DIRTY OLD WITCH* (22m 31s), in which Dracula (Marc Brock) sleeps in the nude, maintains of dungeon of chained nudes, and turns to a witch (seemingly modelled on H.R. PUFNSTUF's Witchipoo) for a potion that might breathe some starch back into his dead organ. In the final act, he realizes that he's not dysfunctional, only gay. —Tim Lucas

EYEWITNESS (SPECIAL EDITION)

1970, Anchor Bay Entertainment, DD-2.0/16:9/LB/+, \$19.98, 91m, DVD-1

FRIGHT

1971, Anchor Bay Entertainment, DD-2.0/16:9/LB/+, \$19.98, 87m, DVD-1

Sporting a West-end accent and a perennial tan, Susan George sailed into our hearts by way of the Thames with a quick detour through Venice Beach. With her cheery insolence, she made shamelessness seem good-natured and perfectly natural; for this British actress, sex was affirmative action. Did she have a precursor? Indeed she did—Bardot, certainly, and *CANDY* (Terry Southern's 1958 rhapsody in very blue to the girl next door) anticipated not only George's arrival, but also the endless carnal cavalcade of dirty blondes that have bounced about our fantasy bedrooms ever since.

Southern's novel is a powerfully funny sexual almanac overflowing with hot and bothered paeans to the unwitting sexpot at its throbbing center and the book provides an alluring blueprint for construction of the Susan George Doll. On her well-rounded surface, Susan George is so like Candy. But there the comparison ends, Candy was everything innocent; George was everything else.

George was the "It" Girl of the Nixon era, a hashpipe-dream of the last standing Flower Child, inflaming the hippies and hard-hats alike. But she also showed promise as one of the more superb actresses of her generation. Sam Peckinpah put her at the epicenter of **STRAW DOGS** (1971, reviewed VW 39:67), perhaps his most unsettling film, and let her rock the house. Working out in Peckinpah's Fight Club was the true test of George's talent; bravely bobbing and weaving in a match that was rigged long before she was born, she

was the fall-girl for every untrustworthy tease ever feared by the paranoid Peckinpah. The film is most disturbing (and revealing) in its uncompromising misogyny (Peckinpah was not intrigued by the Madonna/Whore Complex; for him, whores were complex enough in themselves). In the film's pivotal scene, George's character finds herself unexpectedly fulfilled by being raped and the merciless director makes sure that we are turned on, too. As the schoolgirl-slut bride who gets her brutal comeuppance, George stood her ground and kept her dignity, giving one of most conflicted and passionate performances of any actress in the early Seventies. After **STRAW DOGS**, Susan George should have stood with Vanessa Redgrave, Jane Fonda and Julie Christie in the arena of that era's great actresses. It didn't happen;

she spent the remainder of her wonder years in bad drive-in fare like **TINTONERA...TIGER SHARK**, **ENTER THE NINJA** and **KISS MY GRITS**.

Anchor Bay's recent DVD release of two of her earlier films reminds us—did we need it?—of her rich sensual appeal and bracing, thwarted talent. **EYE-WITNESS**, directed by John Hough and starring George, Mark Lester and Lionel Jeffries, is an update of 1949's **THE WINDOW** about a kid who continually cries wolf until real danger presents itself. Set in Malta, Lester (fresh from the lead in Carol Reed's **OLIVER!**) plays a child who is eyewitness to the killing of a visiting political leader. George plays his big sister, a surrogate mother to this orphaned child, and Jeffries is the storybook grandpa living in a gingerbread lighthouse. People are

in constant motion in this film (Lester is always running) but there is little forward movement; this is a suspense movie with no suspense. Hough (**THE AVENGERS**, **TWINS OF EVIL**) is so constantly busy setting up his next clever camera angle that he kills the momentum (a director can't manufacture excitement when he's tripping over his own camera tracks) and even dampens the possibility of surprise in the actors' performances. Usually a sturdy (if hambone) professional, Jeffries' quaint puppy-dog gran'pa could use a shorter leash; he gives an annoyingly coy and mannered performance. George herself shows hints of the teasing spark that would imbue her later work, even playing opposite a cipher like Peter Vaughan (also destined for **STRAW DOGS**, his charisma in both measured in negative

*Susan George passed the audition for Sam Peckinpah's **STRAW DOGS** with her performance as the terrified babysitter of Peter Collinson's **FRIGHT**.*



numbers). The other actors are docile sheep, happily grazing wherever their fussy director prods them.

Anchor Bay's stunning 1.66:1 transfer of David Holmes' photography may tempt even the most fickle movie-lover: it's a nearly reference quality image with the colors of Malta, the brilliant blue skies and the striking reds of celebratory flags, contrasting with the primary colors of yellow and green dotting the brown stones of the villages. The DVD features a self-congratulatory commentary with director Hough and (uncredited) producer Bryan Forbes, nice men who permit nostalgia and pride to enhance the magnitude of their achievement; they seem unaware that, while the supersaturated imagery is nourishing eye-candy, the movie itself is junk food.

Steeped in shadows and lit by gaslight, Peter Collinson's **FRIGHT** (1971) is a total eclipse of the candy-coated, sundrenched **EYEWITNESS**. As the babysitter threatened by an escaped psychopath (Ian Bannen), Susan George commandeers this film through every turn of its creaky plot, bringing an equivocal sexual charge to her performance (mixing up fear with desire, her performance can be seen as a dry run for her work in **STRAW DOGS** that same year, and was in fact responsible for Peckinpah casting her). George was an expert tease, yet she seemed a little guilty about her formidable talent in this area: her approach/avoidance persona, the self-doubt that her kittenish teasing might be a little out of control, plays a key role in **FRIGHT**. The film's first half is all naked exposition, but at least it's decent storytelling and is

blessed with the warm presence of George Cole, who played the young Scrooge of **A CHRISTMAS CAROL** (1951); as his frosty marriage to Honor Blackman indicates, he's still finding the world a very cold place, indeed. Cole and Blackman play the couple who have hired George for this evening of babysitting and violent psychodrama. When the deranged Bannen arrives, the film becomes a murderous encounter session with the wildly hallucinating madman playing cat and mouse with the terrified babysitter. Bannen balances George's sensual panic with a portrait of malignant insanity leavened by sadness and loss. He takes insightful risks in his performance (he growls and bears his teeth like Karloff's monster while slinging a young child under his arm, shades of **SON OF FRANKENSTEIN**) and his histrionics feel true to the emotions of a man deranged by romantic jealousy.

According to the excellent notes by Mark Wickum, Peter Collinson had a short but prodigious career (with films as varied as **STRAIGHT ON TILL MORNING**, **THE PENTHOUSE** and **THE ITALIAN JOB** at the beginning of his resume). His life was short, too, and troubled by constant upheaval that intensified his solitary nature. Collinson's firsthand knowledge of the passionate outsider helps him bring resonance to these same themes in **FRIGHT**; Bannen's character remains sympathetic, even in his most bloodthirsty moments. Collinson does a good job with a little money and a lot of invention; a scene in which Bannen confuses George's image with that of Blackman's is staged with a surprising sleight of hand, the magic

trick of a consummate director. His inspiration is at full sail as Bannen and George engage in their ominous psycho-sexual two-step; it ends in a small-scale Shakespearean bloodbath with the virginal babysitter suffering a perverse coming of age at the hands of a jealous psychopath. After the violent tango of George and Bannen, we can forgive the slight feeling of an anti-climax; even the pessimistic Collinson cannot manufacture a revenge sweet enough for this cruelly broken young woman.

Anchor Bay's 1.66:1 DVD is a beautiful reproduction of this inexpensive but handsome film. While the photography (by Ian Wilson) doesn't have the sun-baked beauty of Malta as a made-to-order backdrop, the blaze of a fireplace in a dark English mansion gives off an incandescent and provocative heat. And we shouldn't forget why **EYEWITNESS** and **FRIGHT** are so memorable—naturally incandescent and provocative herself, Susan George outshines them both. —Charlie Largent

HIGHLANDER: THE IMMORTAL EDITION

1986, Anchor Bay Entertainment, DD-6.1/DTS-ES/MA/16:9/LB/CC/+, \$39.99, 116m 9s, DVD-1

HIGHLANDER

1986, Anchor Bay Entertainment, DD-6.1/DTS-ES/MA/16:9/LB/CC/+, \$14.99, 116m 9s, DVD-1

"There can be only one," reads the familiar **HIGHLANDER** credo on the packaging of this cult saga's latest DVD incarnation. However, Anchor Bay contradicts its own copywriting by offering two separate editions, focusing more on the appeal of music contributor Queen than



Sean Connery and Christopher Lambert span the centuries as the immortal swordsmen of HIGHLANDER, now available in a definitive edition DVD from Anchor Bay.

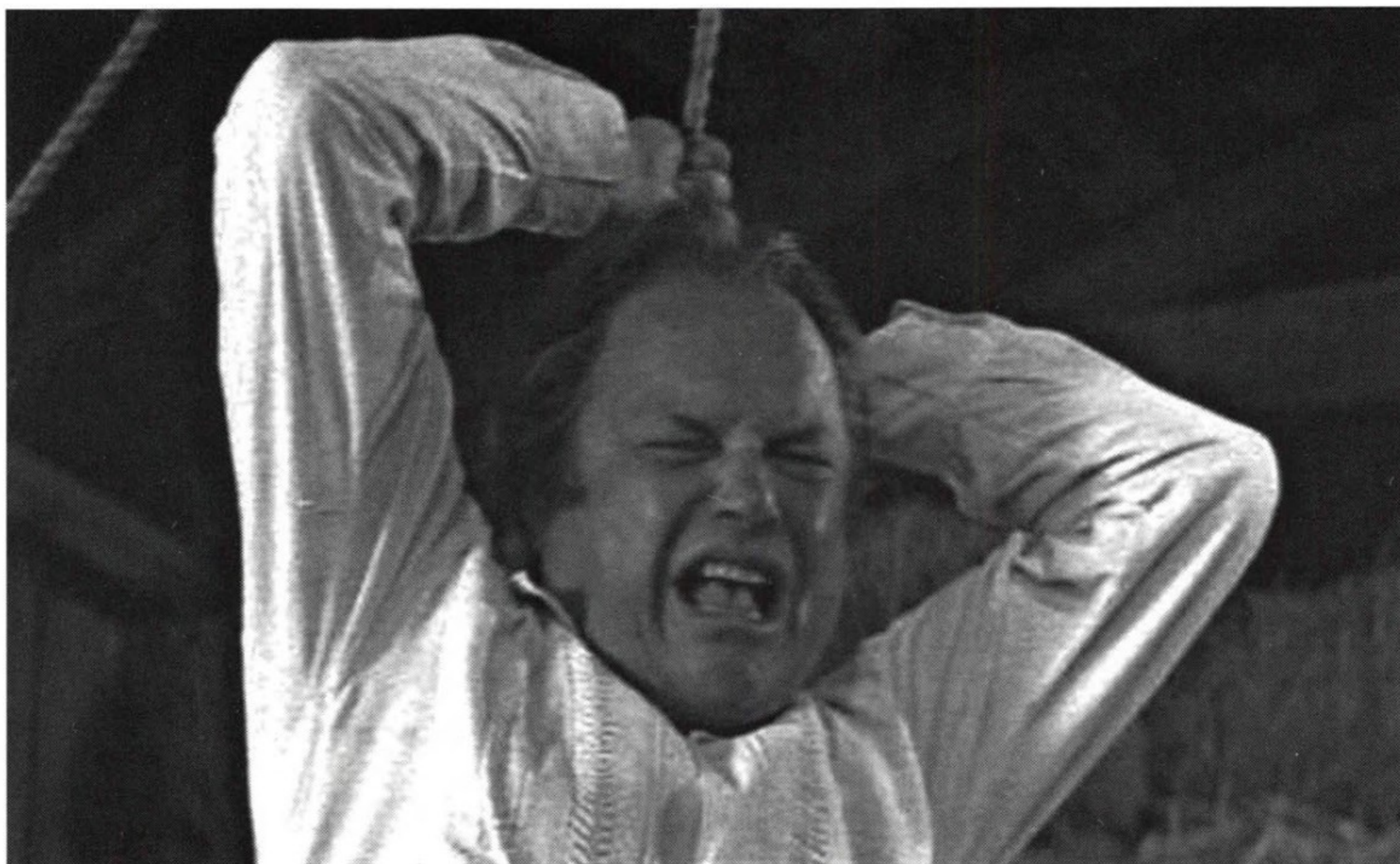
the film itself. Most notorious in the home video fan community as one of the worst digital transfers of the format's infancy, the Republic DVD (later distributed by Artisan) featured a mediocre compression job which wreaked havoc on the already prevalent film grain evident throughout the film. Though sporting much more vivid colors than its predecessors, this "Director's Cut" edition (DC) left significant room for improvement despite bearing the THX seal of approval. The DVD and smoother looking laserdisc contained the same extras, namely a trailer, a lively audio commentary by director Russell Mulcahy and producers Peter S. David and William N. Panzer, and a photo gallery containing some tantalizing stills and script excerpts reflecting unused and discarded footage.

By comparison, Anchor Bay's transfer (AB) is certainly an improvement, at least to those with big screen televisions. Audited back to back on smaller monitors, the AB version (again THX

certified) contains a similarly grainy texture during the underground parking lot and back alley scenes at night, but the jarring artifacting which destroyed the blue sky textures of the Scottish landscape shots (particularly Christopher Lambert's first flashback ride with his clan) is thankfully absent. Viewed in 16:9 playback on a large screen, the transfer comes out miles ahead with a pleasingly film-like texture and impressive detail, making the previous DC look muddy, noisy, and grainy by comparison. The audio incongruities noted in the DC (VW 37:25) are still present, namely the added whooshing sound effects and Sean Connery's missing line of dialogue. As with AB's other recent prestige titles, the film has been given a sonic overhaul in both Dolby Digital Surround EX and 6.1 DTS-ES (plus a surround French track). The original audio limitations are still evident, particularly those bizarre sonic echoes of the opening "Princes of the Universe"

due to the original recording conditions, but the mix contains some appealing split surround effects much more dramatic than those on the DC. More importantly, the dialogue and music are more evenly mixed, minimizing the discomfiting shifts in volume which plagued the previous DC.

The AB version ports over the commentary and standard trailer (complete with temp music from Tangerine Dream's **THE KEEP**) from the previous disc, with a new gallery partially contributed by Davis and Panzer. The wealth of new promotional shots and art is laudable, though owners of the previous release may want to hold on to it as well, for the alternate deleted sequences material and print ads. New additions include a more stately alternate trailer (with an uncredited, different reading of Connery's opening narrative), talent bios for cast, crew, and Queen, and an illustrated liner notes booklet by Rand Vossler and Andy Mangels. As with the



Ralph Meeker stars as a rancher who must pay the price for our country's continuing abuse of Native Americans in David F. Friedman's *BILLY JACK* knock-off, *JOHNNY FIRECLOUD*.

Republic laserdisc release, marketing tie-in promotions consume a distracting amount of the print material.

The most significant new bonus is the presence of three Queen videos: the candlelit "Who Wants to Live Forever," "A Kind of Magic" (whose animation ties in with the cover art for the almost-soundtrack, *A KIND OF MAGIC*), and "Princes of the Universe," featuring a stoic cameo by Lambert in trenchcoat. (A still of Lambert and Freddie Mercury crossing swords also adorns the back cover.) All are presented in 2.0 surround and appear windowboxed during 16:9 playback. Video and sound quality are comparable to other videos of the period, which is no surprise. DVD-Rom material linking to the official movie and Queen websites rounds up the first disc.

The "Immortal Edition," housed in a double Amaray case which slips into a silver metallic

slipcase adorned with the MacLeod sword handle, contains a bonus CD consisting of three tracks: the film version of "Princes of the Universe," an extended version of "One Year of Love," and "Friends Will Be Friends." (Sadly, Mercury's raucous rendition of "New York, New York" which memorably accompanies the Kurgan's joyride through Manhattan has yet to be released.) This bonus CD will set consumers back an additional \$25, or roughly triple the cost of an average import CD single. Judge your **HIGHLANDER** loyalty accordingly. —Nathaniel Thompson

JOHNNY FIRECLOUD / BUMMER!

1975/1972, *Something Weird Video*, DD-1.0/MA/LB/+, \$24.99, 98m 43s/90m 4s, DVD-0

Among the dirty secrets of my own generation—born in the

'50s, blossoming into the "Summer of Love" of the '60s, stranded in the post-Manson/post-Altamont despair of the '70s—were our own "Hate" films. As civil disobedience and peaceful demonstrations were met with crushing (and eventually murderous) authoritarian force, and as assassinations reshaped the politic landscape, the fears, frustrations, and prejudices of the "flower power" Aquarian generation simmered to the screen. The biker movies were arguably the first exploitation films to trade on the secret coin of the realm, spawning one bonafide blockbuster, **EASY RIDER** (1969); the climactic shock galvanized a generation's sense of powerlessness and martyrdom in an explosion of gunpowder, blood, and fire; we'd had enough, and felt the need to lash out. We needed heroes—but we knew our heroes would most likely end up dead in the end.

Fortunately, the biker films had already proffered an unlikely countercultural hero: Tom Laughlin's Billy Jack, a Vietnam vet loner skilled in the martial arts. The character was introduced in **BORN LOSERS** (1967), but it wasn't until Laughlin's sequel **BILLY JACK** (1971) struck boxoffice gold that the character achieved mythic pop icon status. Acknowledging the controversy surrounding government indiscretions on reservation lands and the growing prominence of AIM (the American Indian Movement), Billy Jack tapped the counterculture's growing identification with, and idolization of, the disenfranchised Native American people—which brings us to **JOHNNY FIRECLOUD** (1975), which is David F. Friedman's "Billy Jack," plain and simple. Stripped of Laughlin's moralistic fervor, communal sympathies, martial-arts acrobatics, and Carlos Casteneda mysticism, Friedman (along with screenwriter Wilton Denmark and co-producer/director William Allen Casterman) distill the Billy Jack model to the bloody revenge film archetype at its core.

Like Billy Jack, Johnny Firecloud (Victor Mohica) is a Vietnam vet, caught in a vortex of violence between his reservation and small-town bigotry and corruption led by wealthy white rancher Colby (Ralph Meeker). Colby is blackmailing Sheriff Jesse (David Canary), allowing Colby and his redneck cronies to tyrannize their fiefdom without interference of the law. Johnny is torn between his attraction to Reservation schoolteacher/activist Nanya (Sacheen Littlefeather) and still-smoldering affection for Colby's daughter June (Christina Hart of **THE STEWARDESSES** and **HELTHER SKELTER**), now an

alcoholic in the wake of the forced abortion of the child Johnny never knew they had conceived. After Johnny is imprisoned, Colby and his hooligans lynch the tribe's drunken Chief White Eagle (Frank DeKova) outside the window of Johnny's cell. Johnny's outrage at the Sheriff's refusal to prosecute the crime is fanned into bloodlust when Nanya is gang-raped and murdered by Colby's outlaws, prompting Johnny's own reign of terror.

Just as Friedman's **ILSA, SHE-WOLF OF THE SS** (1974) boasts an additional subversive element for having been shot on the backlot sets of **HOGAN'S HEROES**, **JOHNNY FIRECLOUD** is perversely enriched by the unique pop-cultural crosscurrent of veteran Hollywood character actor Frank DeKova and Sacheen Littlefeather. DeKova was still well known via reruns of **F TROOP**, where he played Chief Wild Eagle, while Littlefeather was renowned as the Native American Marlon Brando sent in his place to refuse the Oscar for **THE GODFATHER** (notoriety that earned her a half-dozen screen roles in the mid-'70s, including a part in **THE TRIAL OF BILLY JACK**). Victor Mohica and Emmy-Award winner David Canary were veteran TV players, while Ralph Meeker lent his patented big-and-little-screen snarl and conviction to the hard-core racist villain role. Among the familiar faces in the film's character roles are George "Buck" Flower (also the film's casting director) and burly Texan actor Richard Kennedy, who popped up in a surprising array of 1970s films including (under the cover of "Wolfgang Roehm") two of the **ILSA** films. Another creative participant worthy of note is

composer William Loose, who scored both pictures in this *Something Weird* double bill; Loose's offbeat career began scoring TV series like **THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE & HARRIET**, **THE DONNA REED SHOW**, and **GUMBY**, and culminated in scores for Friedman, Russ Meyer, and Jack Hill.

Director Castleman is the *auteur* of note on this SW DVD release, which collects his only known directorial ventures. Castleman's association with Friedman began with his score for **THE DEFILERS** and led to frequent line producer work on other Friedman films. As a filmmaker, Castleman is an efficient but uninspired journeyman, and **JOHNNY FIRECLOUD** suffers accordingly. Both Castleman and scenarist Wilton Denmark (whose previous credit was **CAIN'S CUT-THROATS**, 1971) drop the reins in the final act, leaving Colby beaten but unbowed, allowing Johnny to walk into the desert after making his peace with Sheriff Jesse. The Boston nabe audience I saw this with in 1976 openly booed this cop-out ending, in which talk about honor, tolerance, and Jesse's acceptance of his own homosexuality supplant the expected showdown between Johnny and Colby; note, however, Frank Henenlotter's praise for this ending on the audio commentary track, which he says silenced the 42nd St. Lyric Theater audience while impressing Henenlotter because it "defies genre expectations." While it is offbeat, and David Canary's dignified playing of Jesse is unusually progressive for its time, the talky climax is still a major letdown within the film's own terms, and stands as a major misstep in an otherwise brisk, well-crafted exploitationer.

In other ways, the film is absolutely true to its era. Colby is a straw-villain; as an AIM spokesman stated in 1974, "The real violence in America is committed by the Government against our people... The real violence is the fact that on a reservation our women are taken and raped in the back seat of these police cars..." (quoted from VOICES FROM WOUNDED KNEE, 1973, Akwesasne Notes, 1974, pg. 62). Adhering to the exploitation credo, the film revels in rape (in a sequence directed by Friedman) and violence while skirting any potentially troublesome criticism of US government policy or police-state crimes. Also of interest is the mid-1970s "pecking order" of the film's put-upon characters, a telling cultural barometer: to the bigot villains of **JOHNNY FIRECLOUD**, women lie beneath the non-status of the reviled Native Americans, while closet-homosexuals grovel lower than either.

Before the lackluster fadeout, Johnny's vengeance yields much splashy gore, complements of makeup pro Joe Blasco (the ILSA films, David Cronenberg's **SHIVERS** and **RABID**), rendered with brio and a certain measure of black humor (scalped Kennedy stumbles into a church service, prompting the priest to terminate his reference to "the house of—" with the exclamation, "Sweet Jesus!"). And yes, this is the uncut "hard" R-rated version (which becomes a running joke on the commentary track).

Gruesome as all this is, the biggest shock is the 20th Century Fox logo and fanfare that precede the credits; **JOHNNY FIRECLOUD** was indeed picked up (for foreign markets) by Fox, flaunting slicker production values and richer color (by Fox's

processing firm DeLuxe) than any Friedman production before or after. Though this feature proved that, given adequate resources (Friedman's heftiest budget ever, \$220,000), Friedman could match the major independents, he notes on the commentary track, "It just wasn't that profitable." However, according to Friedman, the sale to Fox instantly propelled the production into profit; Friedman's own Entertainment Ventures, Inc. released the film throughout North America, and VARIETY's charts posted the film's domestic earnings at \$1 million. SW's 2.25:1 ratio transfer is crisp and clean throughout, working from original elements fresh from the Fox vaults. It's a gorgeous transfer, a vast improvement over the long OOP A.N.E./Prism VHS pan&scan release (1985, #1652), and the mono-Dolby sound quality is excellent.

BUMMER! (1973) is another "hippy hate film," albeit one even less palatable to its presumed target audience. The Woodstock generation knew we were our own worst enemy: Manson and Altamont had proven that. **BUMMER!** traffics this bitter self-knowledge in the *milieu* of the rock 'n' roll genre, providing the requisite quota of nudity, sex, and mayhem while simplistically dissecting the inequities, hypocrisies, and misogyny of '70s youth culture. This did not endear **BUMMER!** to youth audiences, who steered clear (Friedman notes it "was mildly profitable"), though it may have titillated older male viewers (closer to the age of the producers) who found themselves stranded on the wrong side of the generation gap. Despite the young cast, this is an "old man's perspective" of youth culture, as

the film's promotion materials make quite evident. If the title wasn't enough to alienate potential younger audiences (and it's a bummer, alright), the ballyhoo would ("A Far Out Trip Thru a Hard Rock Tunnel! You Don't Have to Assault a Groupie... You Just Have to Ask!"), but 30 years on, it's a meaty come-on for fans of retro-'70s fodder seeking cheap thrills.

On the **JOHNNY FIRECLOUD** commentary track, Something Weird's Mike Vraney cheerfully deems **BUMMER!** "one of the worst rock movies ever made," and he's right; it's also a singularly ugly film, charting the misfortunes of what Frank Zappa would have dismissed as "just another band from LA." At center stage is The Group—lead guitar Duke (Kipp Whitman), drummer Gary (Gary Buchanan), keyboardist Mike (David Ankrum), and bass-guitarist Butts (Dennis Burkley)—and their groupies: slumming rich girl Barbara (Connie Strickland), brassy soul-sister Janyce (Carol Speed, destined to play the Satanically possessed soul-sister in **ABBY**), and the tragic Dolly (Diane Lee Hart of **CANNONBALL**, **THE GIANT SPIDER INVASION**, and **THE POM-POM GIRLS**). Do the math; if being overweight, self-loathing, alcoholic, and a misogynist isn't bad enough, Butts is shy his own attentive groupie and remains a constant source of rancor. As The Group's lesbian manager Morrie (Leslie McRae of **BLOOD ORGY OF THE SHE-DEVILS**, **COFFY**, **DEATH RACE 2000**, and **THE LONG GOODBYE**) puts it, "He's a pig—he looks like a pig, he smells like a pig, he even acts like a pig. Even the groupies hate his ass.... his own mother don't dig him." Maybe not, but dear old Ma (Kate

Monahan) does indulge in some S&M spanking with her son (crosscut with Duke bedding Dolly after humiliating her). An ill-fated gig in Bakersfield culminates in Butts raping a fan, avoiding prosecution only to finally, fatally, vent his sexual frustrations on Dolly, prompting a bloody shoot-out at the local police station.

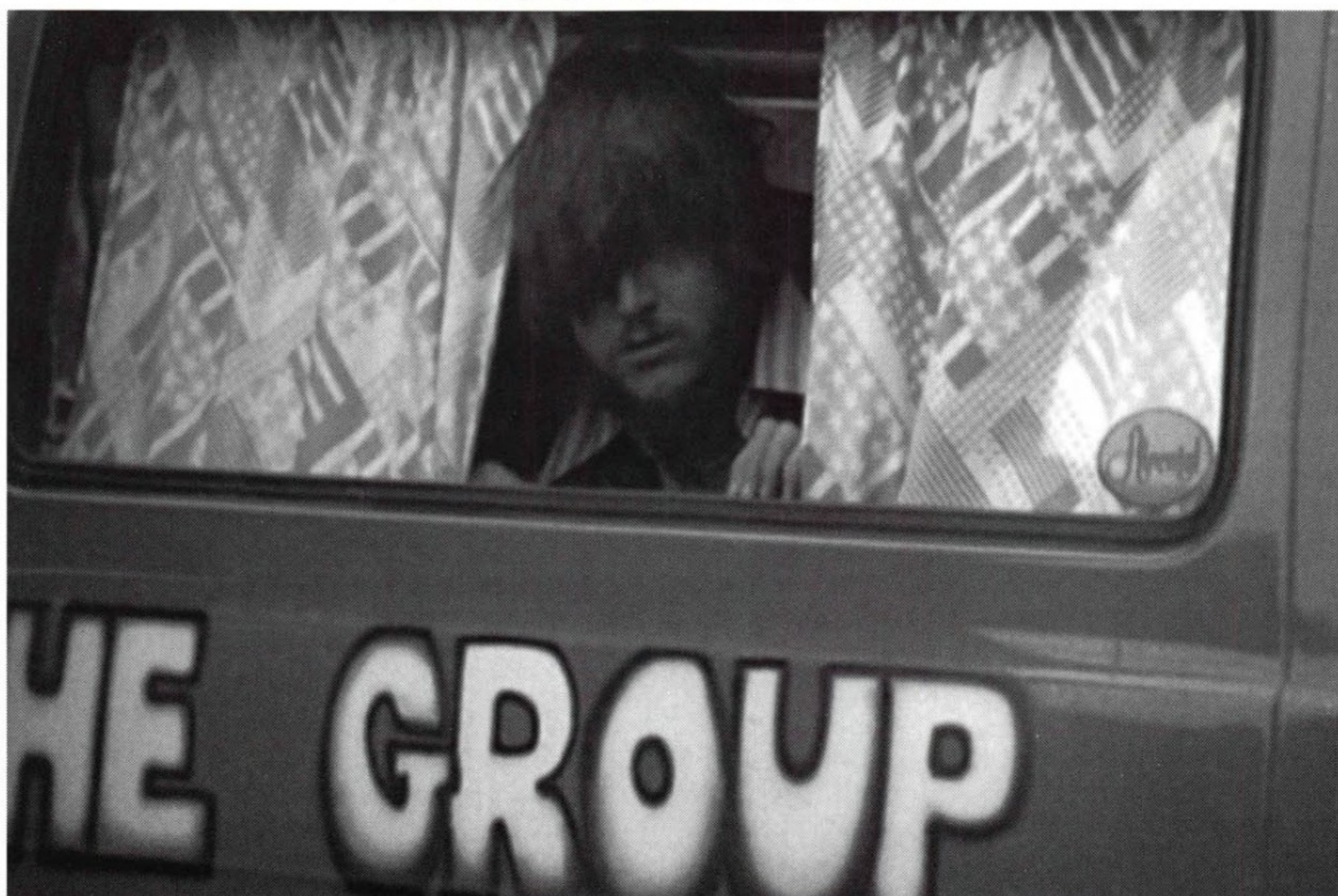
Despite Barbara's financial independence from the groupie dynamic (thanks to her rich parents), Janyce's engaging sassiness, and an odd "stripper audition" confrontation at the "Kitty A Go-Go" club, **BUMMER!** reflects pre-feminist sexist presumptions: "free love" is groovy as long as the men are "free" to sample and the girls give it away for "free." In the context of Alvin Fast's pedestrian script, Butts' belligerent behavior is ultimately lethal, but the dynamic between

the rest of the Group and their groupies is deemed acceptable (though they pay a heavy karmic debt in the end, thanks to Butts). True to his name, Butts is the butt of the film's ire. Thankfully, actor Dennis Burkley (in his feature film debut) is up to the chore, flaunting the character's unsavory manner and self-disgust with abandon, while launching a fertile acting career that now includes over 50 motion picture and TV character roles covering three decades (including the role of coach-potato Mac Slattery on **MARY HARTMAN, MARY HARTMAN** from 1977-78). There's fleeting fun in spotting Dave Friedman and notorious adult film producer/director Bob Cresse (credited as "Robert William Cresse") playing police officials in the final act. Notable behind-the-camera participants include cinematographer Gary

Graver, who shot countless exploitation films throughout the '60s and '70s, and scenarist Alvin L. Fast (**BLACK SHAMPOO**, **EATEN ALIVE**, both 1976, and **SATAN'S CHEERLEADERS**, 1977). Previous to his script debut on **BUMMER!**, Fast associate produced **THE INCREDIBLE 2-HEADED TRANSPLANT** (1971).

SWV's fullscreen transfer is derived from a fine quality source print; the film never looked better in its heyday. The mono audio is acceptable, maintaining the clarity of both dialogue and William Loose's anachronistic "rock" (ahem) score throughout; the latter also blares over the menus. The packaging is up to SWV's usual high standards, peppered with entertaining extras. **JOHNNY FIRECLOUD** sports an audio commentary by David Friedman (accompanied by Mike

"I'm with The Group." Dennis Burkley is featured as a sexually frustrated musician (even the groupies hate his ass) in BUMMER!



Vraney and Frank Henenlotter). Recorded in Henenlotter's Greenwich Village apartment, the sound quality is poor but listenable, and the banter (including discussion of the ILSA films, **BUMMER!**, and more) is engaging. Among the bonus trailers are George Romero's **THERE'S ALWAYS VANILLA**, the utterly banal but bizarre **BETTA BETTA IN THE WALL, WHO'S THE FATTEST FISH OF ALL**, Southern drive-in curio **BOOTS AND THE PREACHER** ("...a tinsel-coated jungle of small-town vice and corruption!"), and a vehicle for a very young Vincent Schiavelli entitled **ANGELS** ("A fantastic blend of unexpected jokes and sudden death!"). The "David F. Friedman Gallery of Exploitation Art" offers a fresh lineup of EVI pressbook materials; there's also a "square-up reel" of WAR DRUMS, one of SW's archival B&W striptease shorts. More offbeat and interesting is

the "Seventies Film Industry Short Subject" **BLIND BIDDING—IT AFFECTS YOU!**, a National Association of Theater Owners PSA in which a car salesman with a ridiculous fake moustache forces a couple to "blind purchase" a lemon. "Theater owners in this state are forced to buy films in this manner!," the short concludes in a rare appeal to theater audiences. This artifact is among the strangest curios SW has yet offered its discerning clientele. —Stephen R. Bisette

THE PHANTOM EMPIRE

1987, Retromedia Entertainment, DD-2.0/MA/LB/+, \$19.95, 83m 38s, DVD-0

After seeing how many millions in profit the executives at CineTel and Trans World were making from his pictures, director Fred Olen Ray decided to finance his own small production

and came up with this six-day, \$120,000 wonder. Millionairess Denea Chambers (Susan Stokey) assembles a team of explorers—led by seedy adventurers Cort (**THE DEADLY AND THE BEAUTIFUL**'s Ross Hagen) and Eddy (**SURF NAZIS MUST DIE**'s Dawn Wildsmith, who was Mrs. Ray at the time)—with the goal of finding an underground enclave filled with priceless jewels. Accompanied by intern archaeologist Andrew (**RE-ANIMATOR**'s Jeffrey Combs) and mineralogist Professor Strock (Robert Quarry), the group treks through a seemingly endless cave towards the center of the Earth, eventually encountering cannibal mutants, a tribe of cave babes (including Michelle Bauer, who conveniently loses her top near the end of the movie), and last, but not least, a stranded alien (Sybil Danning, poured into a sci-fi dominatrix outfit) and her automaton cohort (a replica of

Sybil Danning, poured into a sci-fi dominatrix outfit, stars as an alien stranded on Earth in Fred Olen Ray's THE PHANTOM EMPIRE.



Robby the Robot sporting a less elaborate headpiece).

The lack of time and money results in endless master and medium shots; when Danning is afforded some close-ups in the second half, it is almost startling. As befitting a project constructed on the fly, the scripting is also haphazard, with character inconsistencies (Quarry's professor repeatedly acts in a suspicious manner for, as it turns out, no reason at all) and plot holes galore. When the picture needed to be lengthened by 10m to facilitate a distribution deal, Ray realized that there was no way he could continue using the Bronson tunnels any longer and took the action outdoors. No explanation is provided for why the sky is suddenly visible at the center of the Earth, but we do get some economical spectacle in the form of stock footage from **PLANET OF THE DINOSAURS**. For all of its abundant flaws, **THE PHANTOM EMPIRE** still manages to be reasonably enjoyable, primarily for its gleeful incorporation of so many genre clichés and the fun the cast has with the material. Like the vintage B-pictures to which Ray pays tribute, it works best when viewed as the lead-in to a second, more substantial show. Russ Tamblyn and Michael D. Sonye (**HOLLYWOOD CHAINSAW HOOKERS**) also appear.

THE PHANTOM EMPIRE was originally released on VHS by Prism Entertainment, but Retro-media has produced a new digital transfer derived from the negative. The 1.80:1 image is a bit soft in spots but, when you take the budget and production schedule into account, the picture looks quite nice, with little to complain about. Similarly, the mono sound is flat and poorly edited, but seems to have been accurately transferred. In addition to the usual Fred and Miss



Before the days of DARK SHADOWS, Grayson Hall smoked her way through a high drama performance in SATAN IN HIGH HEELS.

Kim antics, there are a number of supplementary features. Steve Latshaw's **LOOKING BACK AT THE PHANTOM EMPIRE** (24m 9s) features interviews with Ray (who prepared for the whirlwind shoot by studying films made on similar schedules by directors like Edgar G. Ulmer, Roger Corman, and Richard Cunha), Hagen (who offers an amusing anecdote about Danning's manager, the late S.C. Dacy), Danning (who was given the German rights to the picture as part of her salary), and Bauer. There is also 10m of behind-the-scenes video footage taken during the second shoot, alternate clothed takes of Bauer shot for a TV version, and a stills gallery.

Ray and cinematographer Gary Graver also discuss the production's history on a commentary track. The pair reveal that an early sequence was secretly shot on sets originally constructed for **COMMANDO SQUAD**, a picture Ray was

shooting for Trans World, and that the director decided to go ahead and produce the rest of the movie on the basis of this "stolen" material; how they dealt with explaining light in the center of the Earth by having Robert Quarry's scientist character say "The walls of these caves have a strange illumination of their own"; Ray's decision to compensate for the lack of shot variety by constantly having the actors moving within the static frame; the effort involved in making the tiny Bronson Cave look like an endless passage into the center of the Earth; and the fact that the "diamonds" greedily being scooped up by the actors in one scene are actually pieces of a broken car windshield! The track is a few seconds ahead of the visuals but the two are consistently entertaining and informative, and there is little repetition from the documentary. Only five chapters are provided for the feature, which is

pretty skimpy even for a production this short. The DVD was authored by Fat Cat Post. —John Charles

SATAN IN HIGH HEELS (SPECIAL EDITION)

1962, *Something Weird Video*, DD-1.0/+, \$24.99, 89m 52, DVD-0

SATAN IN HIGH HEELS, a title that suggests the private life of a genuinely horny transvestite, is a concept that would have fit neatly into the series of pulpy sex and horror novels written by Ed Wood. Fortunately, this 1962 film—though merely the tale of an ambitious cooch dancer—is still a bracing dose of sexploitation inspired by the somber theatrics of Alexander Singer's **A COLD WIND IN AUGUST** (1961).

The film jumps out the gate in a nice, sweaty frenzy as the director, Jerald Intrator, prowls through a crowded carnival, whipping his camera back and forth among the sweaty customers. Goosed on by the jackrabbit rhythms of Mundell Lowe's grindhouse jazz score (which was released as a soundtrack LP), the imagery suggests a tilt-a-whirl descent into purgatory. Caught in the harsh glare of the tentshow lights, these people seem naked, exposed with every pore and pimple in high relief; they're ripe and ready for corruption and we're happy to join them. This dizzy sequence, with its fleshy eruptions and short attention-span montage, is the perfect introduction to the libidinous nature of the movie at hand; it's the cinematic equivalent of the paroxysms of puberty. The antsy camera naturally settles on the girl displaying the most flesh, burlesque queen Stacey Kane (Meg Myles)—and who better to

help celebrate our resurgent adolescence? Stacey is stacked all over; she embodies a moment in our sexual history when supersizing meant something.

The plot proper kicks into gear when Stacey steals some money from her sex-starved hubby and high-tails it to New York in search of a better "situation." To girls like Stacey, Manhattan is one big gentleman's club. She quickly finds employment in a joint managed by the *Über-Butch* Pepe (Grayson Hall) and begins immediate, nearly simultaneous affairs with the club's owner and his wayward son. This industrious girl also finds the time to drive poor Pepe to distraction, lounging about in tight leather outfits while Pepe sits and stews, gnawing on her omnipresent cigarette holder. The movie is packed with brawny showgirls, bitchy stage managers and the lingering promise of briefly naked flesh (if we pay close attention). Thank the ghost of Kroger Babb for these cheap and cheesy thrills; without them, **SATAN IN HIGH HEELS** would be wearing sneakers. The really dirty secret about most sexploitation films is that they are fundamentally conservative; low rent morality plays hung out to dry on a soap opera's laundry line. **SATAN IN HIGH HEELS** is no different. The drama, hanging on the father, son and Sexy Stacey triangle, is so pedestrian it could be spread over five afternoons of *DAYS OF OUR LIVES*. It's the kitschy details that keep our interest piqued (there is a painting of a snowman in the bedroom of the club owner's love nest that is the essence of this movie's Motel 6 aesthetics). And there is dialogue to convulse your hairdresser: Stacey: "My hair is a mess, it feels like

a mop." Pepe: "Yes, but it will be fixed."

SATAN IN HIGH HEELS is saddled with a ludicrous storyline but it can't be dismissed out of hand. Its precursor, **A COLD WIND IN AUGUST**, navigated the dark alleys of sexploitation to illuminate the lonely cross-streets where love and lust meet. It's an unsentimental portrait of a sexually assured older woman (Lola Albright) who humiliates herself in an affair with a callow teenager. **SATAN IN HIGH HEELS** is a distant and pale reminder of the Albright film, but it's on the same track. Meg Myles has a spark of genuine pathos when she doesn't push her limited skills: we're more apt to buy it when she's not selling it. Even Del Tenney (the future director of **CURSE OF THE LIVING CORPSE** and **HORROR OF PARTY BEACH**) avoids any temptation toward camp in his role as the club's gay music director. Which is to say that the people who worked on this film were sensitive to the story's dramatic potential: in other words, it's all a little boring. This is an exploitation film made by people with too much talent. Sexploitation is best at its most base and drama at its most exalted; **SATAN IN HIGH HEELS** is neither. Give me **VIXEN** or **A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE**. (**A COLD WIND IN AUGUST** will do.)

Something Weird's DVD preserves the striking cinematography by Bernard Herschensen; the fullscreen image is close to immaculate and every fleshy detail, every bead of breaking sweat is there to savor. The audio is slightly troubled at the beginning, with some muted dialogue, but it is only temporary. Most importantly, the



Patty Shepard—Spain's answer to Barbara Steele—prepares to enjoy a little Gaby Fuchs on tap in *WEREWOLF SHADOW* (formerly *THE WEREWOLF VS. THE VAMPIRE WOMAN*).

terrific music score is vibrant and keeps the characters firmly centered on their runway to purgatory, never missing a beat but always threatening to go over the edge. The movie would be more fun if they had.

Something Weird's generous producers sometime confuse quantity with quality (though in the world of Something Weird, "quality" is in the eye of the pervert). And so the extras on this disc are a mixed bag. Along with a series of trailers that sport come hither titles like **CONFESIONS OF A BAD GIRL** and **GIRL WITH AN ITCH**, there is a bonus feature that is too long by half. **THE WILD AND THE NAKED** stars a square-jawed nudie model with the suspicious moniker, "Tana French." It's a silent film (supposedly) narrated by Ms. French in the grating, sing-song cadence of a drunken Smurf. An excruciating document of a day in the life of this tiresome young woman, **THE WILD AND THE**

NAKED is 60m 55s of tribulation comprised of endless, numbingly repetitive scenes of our little French pastry posing, sunbathing and running from a guy in a gorilla suit. Followed by more posing, more running, more gorilla suits. If **SATAN IN HIGH HEELS** reminds us of purgatory, **THE WILD AND THE NAKED** feels more like limbo. —Charlie Largent

WEREWOLF SHADOW

La Noche de Walpurgis
aka *Nacht der Vampire*,
THE WEREWOLF VS. THE VAMPIRE WOMAN,
BLOOD MOON

1970, Anchor Bay Entertainment,
DD-1.0/16:9/LB/+, \$19.98,
94m 37s, DVD-1

CURSE OF THE DEVIL

El Retorno de Walpurgis
1973, Anchor Bay Entertainment,
DD-1.0/16:9/LB/+, \$19.98,
84m 2s, DVD-1

THE FURY OF THE WOLFMAN

La Furia del Hombre Lobo
1971, Alpha Video, \$10.00,
83m 21s, DVD-0

DR. JEKYLL AND THE WEREWOLF

Dr. Jekyll y el Hombre Lobo
1971, Mondo Macabro #MMD-102, DD-1.0/16:9/LB/+, £15.99,
83m 2s, DVD-0, PAL

Advance word from Anchor Bay Entertainment of the imminent release of two Paul Naschy *hombre lobo* ("Wolfman") vehicles as widescreen DVDs was met by fans of the Madrid-born maverick with rabid anticipation—yet the occasion does not mark Naschy's digital debut, either in the US or abroad. In 1999, the Munich-based VCL Communications released PAL transfers of León Klimovsky's **VENGEANCE OF THE ZOMBIES** [*La Rebelion de las Muertas*, 1972] and Carlos



When not hirsutically challenged by the full moon, werewolf Waldemar Daninsky (Paul Naschy) romances his co-stars in *WEREWOLF SHADOW*.

Aured's **HORROR RISES FROM THE TOMB** [*El Espanto Surge de la Tumba*, 1973], in German only. Although **VENGEANCE** was the "clothed" version and **HORROR** resorted to some substandard video inserts for the sake of completeness, the letterboxed discs represented a quantum leap beyond anything Naschy fans (at least those with multi-region capability) had seen on video.

ABE's **WEREWOLF SHADOW** [US: **THE WEREWOLF VS. THE VAMPIRE WOMAN**] and **CURSE OF THE DEVIL** fulfill the promise of those German discs, offering colorful and complete widescreen English language transfers that will have Naschians howling for more. Beating Anchor Bay's street date by several weeks was Alpha Video's cut-rate DVD of an earlier entry in the "Waldemar Daninsky" saga, **FURY OF THE WOLFMAN**. Checking in most recently is Mondo Macabro's PAL, all-region DVD of **DR. JEKYLL AND**

THE WEREWOLF, a follow-up, but not a direct sequel to, **WEREWOLF SHADOW**.

The success of *La Noche de Walpurgis* marked a sea change in the marketability of Spanish horror, spurring a brief production boom that boosted the careers of such fledgling fantasists as Eloy de la Iglesia, Vicente Aranda, José Maria Elío, Jorge Grau, and Amando de Ossorio, among others. (The future director of **TOMBS OF THE BLIND DEAD**, Ossorio had once counseled Naschy *against* making horror films in Spain!) The seeds of change had been sown a decade earlier, when the Franco regime ushered in the era of *apertura*, a "crack" in its isolationist foreign policy that allowed Spain to enter the European Common Market in hope of attracting tourism. With American epics invited to film on the Iberian peninsula taking advantage of local talent, one of many to benefit was Jacinto Molina (years before his German

producers would request the cod-Teutonic *nom de were* "Paul Naschy"), a former extra in Nicholas Ray's **KING OF KINGS**. Naschy's first star turn as luckless lycanthrope Waldemar Daninsky was in 1968's *La Marca de Hombre Lobo* [US: **FRANKENSTEIN'S BLOODY TERROR**; reviewed VW 30:16]. Despite initial success, the next three series entries—the French-financed (and perhaps unfinished) *Las Noches del Hombre Lobo*, the multi-national monster rally *Los Monstruos del Terror* [US: **ASSIGNMENT: TERROR**, 1969] and the disastrous homegrown *La Furia del Hombre Lobo*—did little to further the cause.

As with *La Marca*, *La Noche* was a cost-sharing venture between Madrid and Munich's Hi-Fi Stereo 70 and was entrusted to Argentinean journeyman León Klimovsky, with a Spanish cast augmented by ringers from Germany and America. Setting its fable of fate and

fantasy in faraway Austria and France, Naschy's script sics ancient evil on the newly-minted jet set, reveling in the mossy underbelly of *los felices*, Spain's answer to *la dolce vita*. While **La Marca** plumbed the *leitmotifs* of the horror classics of Universal and Hammer, **La Noche** tips its hat to Mario Bava's influential **BLACK SUNDAY** [*La maschera del demonio*, 1960] in its use of slow motion photography to evoke the imbalance of a natural order upset by mortal congress with the damned. (In 1970, Hammer's **THE VAMPIRE LOVERS** opened with a shot of a shrouded revenant advancing in slo-mo, which may also have influenced Naschy.) Revived from oblivion in **La Noche**'s opening frames, Naschy's tortured shape-shifter seeks peace in the mountain provinces but his fate is sealed when he falls for Elvira (**MARK OF THE DEVIL**'s Gaby Fuchs), a student who has revived the long dead Wandessa Dárvula de Nadasdy (American actress Patty Shepard). Unable to defeat Wandessa as a mere mortal, but aware that his beast within will destroy the woman he loves, Waldemar arms Elvira with the Mayenza cross, a relic of sufficient holiness to stop Wandessa from summoning Satan on Walpurgis Night and end his eternal torment.

While the early '70s found the British still beating the Gothic drum, Italy had largely put its back to antiquity in favor of the ultra-modern *gialli*. Because its past *was* its present, Spain split the difference, setting historical horrors—Wandessa is modeled after the 16th Century "Bloody Countess" who was the subject also of Hammer's **COUNTESS DRACULA** (1970), Jorge Grau's **THE LEGEND OF BLOOD CASTLE**

[**Ceremonia Sangrienta**, 1972] and an episode in Walerian Borowczyk's **IMMORAL TALES** [*Contes Immoraux*, 1974]—against the false security of the modern age (sleeping pills, discotheques and the superior performance of the Mercedes Benz). **La Noche** set the pace for Spanish horrors to come; Amando de Ossorio's "Blind Dead" films would further explore the hellish rift between then and now, stealing more than a few tricks from Naschy *et al.* However sloppy (DP Leopoldo Villaseñor routinely catches the crew reflected in shiny surfaces) and inconsistent (Wandessa is attributed to both the 11th and 15th centuries), **La Noche** works as an oft-told folktale that, however poorly it may hold up in the light of day, nonetheless delivers a palpable chill the night before. Wearing a hairpiece for the first time and looking fit, Naschy is a sympathetic anti-hero; if Gaby Fuchs seems an enervated heroine, the slack is picked up by Patty Shepard and Barbara Capell (as Elvira's girlfriend Genevieve, who crosses over to the dark side with girlish glee).

Those who missed the American run of **La Noche de Walpurgis** (released in the US by Ellman Enterprises as **THE WEREWOLF VS. THE VAMPIRE WOMAN**) would have their curiosities piqued in the pre-video era by stills and plot descriptions published in Barrie Pattison's **THE SEAL OF DRACULA** (Bounty Books, 1975), David Pirie's **THE VAMPIRE CINEMA** (Crescent Books, 1977) and Alan Frank's **HORROR FILMS** (Spring Books, 1977), as well as in the pages of **FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND** magazine. When the film made it to video via AIR Video's grainy and incomplete tape titled

BLOOD MOON, Naschians had to bite back disappointment at the missing gore and nudity. A subsequent VHS release by Sinister Cinema was longer (82m 16s) but also full screen and not much to look at—making a definitive version of **La Noche de Walpurgis** one of several Holy Grails for the discriminating Euro-Cultist. Anchor Bay's wide-screen (1.85:1) transfer bears the Canadian/UK title, **WEREWOLF SHADOW** and impresses instantly with its clarity and the vivacity of its color palette. While the disc clocks in at 12m longer than the Sinister tape and 10m longer than one from Luminous Film & Video Wurks (culled from a Dutch source), what really impresses here is not what was cut from earlier releases but what can finally be *seen*.

WEREWOLF SHADOW's pre-credits setpiece, in which Waldemar is revived by a pair of bickering pathologists (played by Julio Peña and Hungarian actor Bernabe Barta Barri), seems to run longer because most of its action previously played out in almost complete darkness; ditto, the transformed Waldemar's attack on a female victim in the forest, which now allows those who pop for the digital upgrade a greater appreciation of the werewolf makeup (previously, only Waldemar's eyes and teeth stood out against the gloom) and a lingering gaze at the victim's bloody *décolletage*. When *el hombre lobo* bites out the throat of the randy Pierre (**FURY OF THE WOLFMAN**'s José Marco Davó), the viewer can now see what writer Pete Tombs referred to in his essential 1995 Euro-Cult study **IMMORAL TALES** as "gouts of bloody flesh falling from the werewolf's jaws." The increased clarity teases out details never

previously apparent: the downy blonde hairs on Gaby Fuchs' forearms, Barbara Capell's gold belly chain and nearly all of Patty Shepard's physical performance behind Wandessa's funereal veil. The zebra stripes on Elvira's designer coat can now be seen to be brown instead of black, and the blood splotches on the walls of the shed where Waldemar's sister (**MURDER MANSION**'s Yelena Samarina) chains him during the full moon now look agreeably incarnadine and less like gravy stains.

Not all changes are necessarily for the better. Lost in this upgrade is **THE WEREWOLF VS. THE VAMPIRE WOMAN**'s title sequence (comprised of shots from the film's climax), replaced by perfunctory titles that appear over a freeze frame of Naschy in werewolf mufti. Gone also are the Gothic CAM Music library tracks, replaced with cues composed by Antón García Abril. While Abril's subsequent work for Amando de Ossorio was supremely creepy, these lounchy orchestrations feel (however groovy) unprepared for the horror genre and may be off-putting to some who prefer their horror served *basso profundo*. On the plus side, the absence of the tacked-on tracks reveals the use of ambient sound—the chirp of cicadas or birdsong—to underscore dialogue scenes with more subtlety, which gives the scenes less of a canned feel. Also of dubious value is the restoration of two scenes involving secondary hero Inspector Marcelle (Andrés Resino). Likely filmed for the sole purpose of beefing up a running time reduced by censor-imposed cuts, this filler (for which English subtitles make up for the lack of an English soundtrack) finds Marcelle first phoning his superior for permission to find

Elvira (1m 22s) and then pestering a local official for clues (5m 23s). Back on the plus side, **WEREWOLF SHADOW** also revels in some extended nudity and heavy petting in a bedroom scene that culminates in Elvira (seen nude from the waist up) mounting Waldemar as the camera pushes in on their hungry mouths.

WEREWOLF SHADOW is well-served by its 1.84:1 framing. Colors are vivid (note Genevieve's pale blue eyes, which flutter with the excitement of immortality) and fleshtones robust (except for Gaby Fuchs, who seems about a quart low even before Genevieve puts the bite on her). The mono sound seems mixed louder than on previous tapes, making the English dub a bit harsh. The disc is encoded with 25 chapters. Extras consist of two letterboxed trailers: one for **WEREWOLF SHADOW** (3m 9s) and another (erroneously tagged as a TV spot) for **THE WEREWOLF VS. THE VAMPIRE WOMAN** (1m 1s). Mark Wickum provides a bio for Paul Naschy and there is also a gallery of poster, publicity and video art (62 images in all, with some absolutely beautiful one-sheets of titles both familiar and obscure).

Naschy is also the subject of the 14m 48s video featurette "Interview With The Werewolf," produced and directed by Gary Hertz. Interviewed by an unseen/unheard Mike Hodges, Naschy comments (in Spanish) on his early years in the business, of his struggles to establish himself as both an actor and a cottage industry unto himself and of Spain's primitive state of the arts in werewolf makeup; relating the factoid that his first werewolf fangs were made out of cut potato, Naschy confesses "Maybe I

shouldn't have revealed this, but it is a part of history."

The same extras complement ABE's **CURSE OF THE DEVIL** disc (accompanied, of course, by its own 3m 20s letterboxed trailer), the keeppcase copy for which trumpets the recommendation of VW's Shane M. Dallmann [in VW 66:24] that it remains "one of the finest Spanish horror films ever." Although the original Spanish title, **El Retorno de Walpurgis**, recalls that of the earlier León Klimovsky film, it is set a hundred years earlier (as a series, the Waldemar Daninsky films were more like-minded than literal sequels) with the tragic Waldemar etched in entirely different shades. While the Waldemar of **WEREWOLF SHADOW** seemed accustomed to his curse, the pampered landowner of Carlos Aured's **CURSE OF THE DEVIL** is an aristocratic hothouse flower. The heir to a Carpathian dynasty dating back to the Middle Ages (the film opens on the routing of a Satanic coven by a knight bearing the Daninsky crest), Waldemar suffers the malediction of the coven's incinerated figurehead (Maria Silva), whose followers dispatch a gypsy girl (Ines Morales) to take Waldemar's virginity and infect him with "the curse of the Devil." Despite the love of a good woman (Fabiola Falcón), the bestial Waldemar slaughters her entire family and several townsfolk before the circle of his preordained fate is drawn closed.

With six entries in the Waldemar Daninsky saga and better than half a dozen more non-Waldemar features (**COUNT DRACULA'S GREAT LOVE, THE HUNCHBACK OF THE MORGUE** and **VENGEANCE OF THE ZOMBIES**) under his belt, Naschy and Aured beefed up the level



*Better-than-usual makeup and makeup effects highlight Paul Naschy's seventh werewolf opus, **CURSE OF THE DEVIL**.*

of violence and sexual content. A one-woman-manbeast in **WEREWOLF SHADOW**, Waldemar here (despite initial inexperience) beds three ladies before the final fade-out, two of them siblings. More problematic (at least in Spain in 1973) must have been the film's depiction of a Black Mass in which several virgins are sodomized by the Devil himself (depicted as a menacing man-shaped shade), in search of a candidate to put the bite on Waldemar. As was the case in their first collaboration, **HORROR RISES FROM THE TOMB**, Naschy and Aured lay waste to all but one of their principal characters, dashing expectations for the conventional, well-made Gothic tale suggested by the film's Victorian setting. **CURSE OF THE DEVIL** is proud in character work by many familiar Spanish horror faces: Elsa Zabala, Eduardo Calvo, and Anna Fara (in a role similar to one she played in **LEGEND OF BLOOD CASTLE**), as well as

CANNIBAL MAN's Fernando Sanchez Polack and **CUT-THROATS NINE**'s José Manuel Martín as a pair of locals named Boris and Bela.

Shot by Francisco Sánchez (frequently behind the camera for Naschy's '70s output) with fewer visible seams than **WEREWOLF SHADOW** but also considerably less poetry, **CURSE OF THE DEVIL** always looked a bit gauzy and soft, without the intense chromatics of the earlier film. Still, one can't argue with the increased brightness of the visuals and the clarity that allows the viewer to see all of Naschy's werewolf attacks in detail (the make-up here is often short-listed as among the series' best). Anchor Bay's widescreen (1.84:1) transfer clocks in at 84m 2s, several minutes longer than either the OOP full screen transfer (in the LP mode) from Gemstone/United American Video and Sinister Cinema's VHS tape. All the nudity cut from the former release (but present in the latter)

is on view here. **CURSE OF THE DEVIL** has been given 23 chapters, listed (as is the case with **WEREWOLF SHADOW**) on the reverse side of a sturdy cardboard insert illustrated with a one-sheet reproduction from the film's May 1977 release by Goldstone Films.

Some Naschy enthusiasts have swiped at Anchor Bay for the relatively stripped-down nature of these Naschy DVDs; certainly when compared to their Lucio Fulci or Dario Argento collections, ABE has kept these releases somewhat modest. As if testing the waters, no "Paul Naschy Collection" is indicated, no liner notes are offered and art for keeppcase covers looks perfunctory (in the case of **CURSE OF THE DEVIL**, it's downright ugly). Despite a possible curatorial diffidence and limited (but not inconsiderable) supplements, these discs benefit from subtly animated menu screens (on **WEREWOLF SHADOW**, the werewolf lunges; on **CURSE OF THE**



*In one of his most chilling performances, Paul Naschy transforms not only into a werewolf, but Mr. Hyde—seen here torturing Shirley Corrigan in **DR. JEKYLL AND THE WEREWOLF**.*

DEVIL, a paw slashes the screen while blood pools) and, ever more rare these days, not a jot of condescension. Their relative demerits far outnumbered by their merits, these DVDs from Anchor Bay Entertainment can be whole-heartedly recommended. Listed at \$19.98, both discs can be gotten from certain retailers for as little as \$12.99.

Well before Anchor Bay released **WEREWOLF SHADOW** and **CURSE OF THE DEVIL**, Alpha Video Classics slipped onto the market a full frame transfer of **FURY OF THE WOLFMAN**, released previously by Alpha as an SLP-speed tape. (For narrative details and a critique of the film itself, please refer to our review of Unicorn Video's OOP VHS release in VW 66:20.) Clocking at 83m 21s, Alpha's DVD is essentially identical to the 1984 Unicorn tape (the "clothed version") but nearly 2m shorter than the 1991 Charter Entertainment tape

(which offered the Continental version, but not all the nudity seen in the variant titled **THE WOLFMAN NEVER SLEEPS**). The image is grainy and marred by all manner of speckles and scratches; the opening titles (41s) are incomplete. Is the disc watchable? Well, sure—for Naschy completists, many of whom popped for the purchase (spending anywhere between \$5 and \$15) as an appetizer before the arrival of the Anchor Bay releases. The disc has five chapter stops (only four accessible from the main menu) and there are no extras. The DVD's best asset is its cover art, which depicts villainess Perla Cristal shooting red laser beams out of her eyes at Naschy's Wild Thing. Don't be fooled by the 8 frame grabs on the back of the keepcase, which are not indicative of the quality of this transfer. The jacket copy lists a running time of 90m—as if!

Available in the States a couple of weeks after the official release of Anchor Bay's Naschy discs was Mondo Macabro's all-region PAL DVD of **DR. JEKYLL AND THE WEREWOLF**. Made immediately after **WEREWOLF SHADOW**, this dizzyingly intertextual tale begins in present day London, decamps for an extended second act to backward Transylvania (where Barta Barri runs the local gin mill and warns travelers against "the old cemetery"), and then doubles back to the UK, where heroine Shirley Corrigan (**THE DEVIL'S NIGHTMARE**) brings Waldemar to be cured of his lycanthropy by old flame Henry Jekyll (Jack Taylor, who often dubbed Naschy into English), grandson of... the Dr. Jekyll. The plan—to have the Jekyll family's infamous soul-splitting serum injected into Waldemar as a counteragent to his moon curse—goes pear-shaped due to the machinations


of Jekyll's literally back-stabbing assistant (the gimlet-eyed Mirta Miller)—leaving Waldemar beside himself in dividing his evening hours between the ravenous *el Hombre Lobo* and the murderous Mr. Hyde.

When Tim Lucas reviewed Sinister Cinema's 88m **DR. JEKYLL AND THE WEREWOLF** tape in VW 66:22, he found the fullscreen transfer (from a 16mm source) to be acceptable, with marks taken off for muddy colors and a grainy image. Mondo Macabro's DVD is a great step up from that compromise, offering a clear and colorful transfer letterboxed at 1.68:1 and enhanced for 16:9 playback. The image clarity is astonishing, bringing out the lustre of costumes and furnishings (the nap of corduroy, the glimmer of metal, the shine of buffed leather) and the use of the color blue by cinematographer Francisco Fraile (Eloy de Iglesia's **CLOCKWORK TERROR**) as a recurring motif (Jekyll's labcoat, Justine's nightgown, London streetlights, Hyde's cyanotic pallor). One is also aware of such minute details as the cinema marquee heralding **HOW THE OTHER HALF LOVES** over Naschy's shoulder as the insatiable Mr. Hyde trolls the streets for "different women" and the five-pointed star on the syringe that Jekyll uses to inject Waldemar with his curative. Of course, the cleaner image also betrays production goofs (the sign for Jekyll's "Researchs Clinic") and the use of burly stuntmen for both Naschy's cemetery face-off with Luis Induni's cutthroat gang and for Mirta Miller's fatal flop onto a spiked thresher. For those used to seeing Naschy's exploits through a scrim of multiple video generations, this is the kind of aesthetic

rebirth that one could get used to, in a flash.

For many consumers considering this purchase, the potential contract breaker will be the that Mondo Macabro could obtain rights only for the domestic, or "clothed" version of this film, rather than the export version (the source of Sinister's tape), which was rife with considerable female nudity and sexual cruelty. The differences between the versions are fairly dramatic. Before Waldemar-as-Hyde throws himself upon a terrified Justine in the film's final third, the export version has him yank down her nightgown, exposing her breasts (a bit of business omitted from the domestic release). In the next scene, with Justine chained up in the attic, Sandra and Hyde merely whip and taunt her; the export version pressed on to have a leering Sandra fondle the half-nude Justine's bloody breasts. Later, when Hyde and Sandra fall out, the domestic version has Hyde administer a vicious caning, while the export version begins with Hyde stripping Sandra, caning her, and then raping her. The domestic print also eliminates the nudity during Hyde's strangulation of a Soho prostitute—but this scene in the tamer domestic cut actually runs longer by 9s. While this watered-down version cannot help but displease Euro-Cult's hardier aficionados, the disc should not be spurned out of hand. Keep in mind, it's not a cut print, but one employing alternate footage, making it worthy of consideration and respect.

The disc is chaptered with 12 stops. Extras include cast and crew bios (Naschy's comes courtesy of Mirek Lipinski) authored for the most part by Pete Tombs,

who has also provided the essay, "The Pain In Spain: The Horror Film Boom of the 1970s." This brief but informative monograph chronicles fantastic filmmaking in Spain from early co-productions with Italy (such as Alberto de Martino's **THE BLANCHEVILLE MONSTER**) to parodies on the order of Amando de Ossorio's fang-in-cheek *Malenka*, which is all Spain had to offer before *La Marca del Hombre Lobo* and Ibanez Narcisso Serrador's *La Residencia* [US: **THE HOUSE THAT SCREAMED**, 1969]. Paul Naschy is interviewed at his childhood home for the 19m 3s featurette, *MEMOIRS OF A WOLFMAN*—also the title of Naschy's 1997-2000 autobiography [reviewed VW 66:74]. Much of the material here will be familiar to those who follow Naschy's career, but the man appears relaxed, enthusiastic and even passionate when speaking of his films, his co-stars and his preference for the wolfman, who "can have a family, father children, get a mortgage, buy a car, walk down the street and no one would know—until the full moon." Naschy opines Spain's disdain for fantasy (a failing he credits to the Judeo-Christian tradition), but is justifiably proud of having gone against the grain. Despite some spelling errors in the English subtitles, the interview is a splendid extra to a superlative disc. Mondo Macabro's keeppcase makes use of original poster art (in which Naschy's werewolf bears more than a passing resemblance to Universal's *The Wolfman*) and the disc kicks off with the Mondo Macabro theme and logos (look fast for Coffin Joe, Santo and the Turkish Mr. Spock), which is good infectious fun. —Richard Harland Smith 

BIBLIO WATCHDOG

THE MUMMY In Fact, Fiction and Film

By Susan D. Cowie and Tom Johnson

McFarland & Company, Inc. (Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640, www.mcfarlandpub.com)

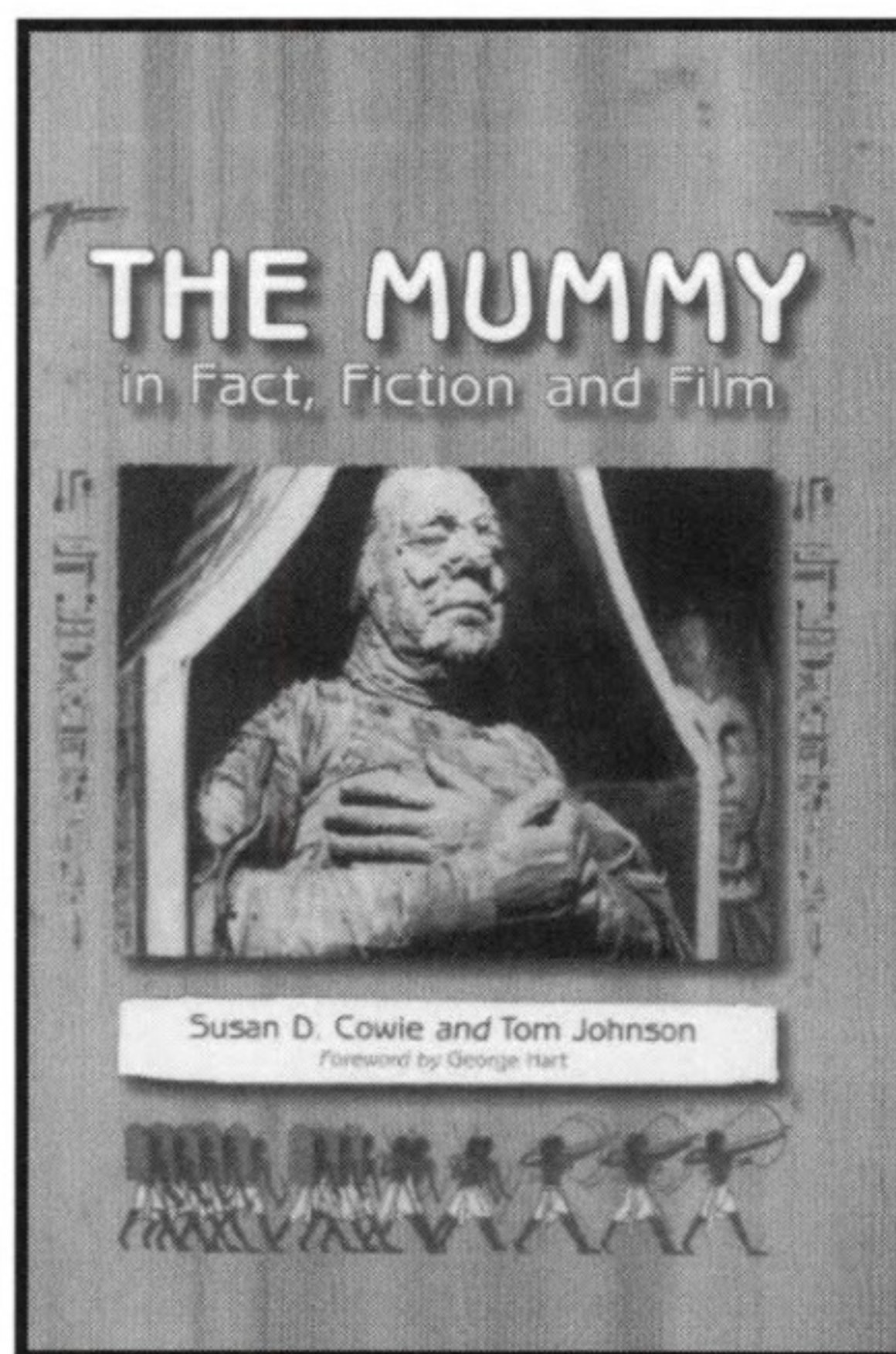
202 pp., \$45 (hardcover) plus \$4.00 shipping from the publisher.

Reviewed by Anthony Ambrogio

A *love of movies* can sometimes lead to the acquisition of unexpected wisdom. Cinemaphiles, attracted to this book by its "Mummy in Film" aspect, will also gain a good deal of non-movie insight about actual and fictional mummies. "The Mummy in Fact" section offers various revelations—including the definition of the word "mummy" ("the preserved body of a human being or an animal"—preserved "by any means, either deliberate or natural," p. 5); the origin of the word (other peoples thought Egyptian mummies were blackened with bitumin; "mummy" is a combination of "the Persian word *mum* and the Arabic *mumiyah*, both of which mean bitumen"); the history and process of mummification (there were three increasingly more elaborate—and expensive—methods); and the development and history of Egyptology. (Appropriately, one of the most famous 19th Century excavators was named Flinders Petrie, whose own name roughly translates to "chips off the block.")

Authors Susan D. Cowie and Tom Johnson give the discovery of King Tut's tomb its proper due as a magnificent find and "the first worldwide media event of Egyptology" (p. 3), especially since it came with an exploitable, invented "curse." But their treatment of the curse is (*ahem!*) cursory—perhaps because they assumed readers would be already familiar with the details. More clearly setting up and spelling out the situation would have added weight to their debunking.

In a puzzling transposition, the text violates the title's logical order (fact, fiction, film), placing the Film section *before* the Fiction section, even though Mummy literature anteceded Mummy movies by at least seven decades—more, if you count ancient Greek historian Herodotus's retelling of an older Egyptian tale, "Khaemwaset and the Mummies,"



which the authors cite as the first recorded Mummy story. They mark the origin of the genre proper with Jane Webb's *THE MUMMY! A TALE OF THE TWENTY-SECOND CENTURY*, first published in 1827. The first Mummy-themed movie appeared 72 years later. (The authors also mention an 1899 Georges Méliès short, *CLEOPATRA*, in their text, but it's missing from their filmographic Appendix.) Because several Mummy movies have had literary sources (eg., Bram Stoker's *JEWEL OF THE SEVEN STARS*, Arthur Conan Doyle's "Lot 349"), it's surprising that the writers have put the cinematic cart before the literary horse. The question that ends the Film section ("Will somebody out there do Anne Rice's *MUMMY*. Please?")

Lon Chaney, Jr. as Universal's popular mummy Kharis, captured in a publicity pose for *THE MUMMY'S GHOST*. ►

p. 140), may be a segue to the Fiction section, but would work better as the book's last line, before the authors' conclusion. (Naturally, readers can remedy this odd reversal by reading the two sections out of order, as we recommend you do.)

The Film section entries follow a set framework: credits, synopsis, critique. Cowie & Johnson use this structure to examine Universal's **THE MUMMY** (1932) and 1940s Kharis series (naturally), along with other films, but—never claiming that their study is comprehensive—don't include every movie featuring a bandaged revenant. However, at times, their text displays odd lacunae. A photo of Lon Chaney, Jr.'s lycanthropic mummy from 1959's *La Casa del Terror* graces the cover (and appears again on p. 81), but the movie itself is mentioned only fleetingly (p. 78)—and listed in the Appendix under its 1964 Americanized aberration, **FACE OF THE SCREAMING WEREWOLF**. The entry for **THE ROBOT VS. THE AZTEC MUMMY** [*La Momia contra el Robot*



Humano, 1957] lacks a credits component and implies that the authors have discussed its predecessor, *La Momia* (1957), when they haven't: "*La Momia* inspired three sequels.... As with *La Momia*, there are several versions of this picture, none of which are very interesting" (p. 83)—which leaves the reader uncomfortably aware that, while one title has been skimmed over, several alternate versions have been left unexplained and undiscussed.

The authors' treatment of Hammer's four unrelated Mummy films is more thorough and informative (as one would expect from Johnson, co-author of McFarland's *HAMMER FILMS: AN EXHAUSTIVE FILMOGRAPHY* [1996]), but some statements remain unclear. For example: "... it is astounding that management decided to leave the misnaming of the god alone. Many of those involved in the project protested, but management, in its wisdom, decided that the cinemagoing public would not notice. They did." (critique of **THE MUMMY** [1959], p. 95). Mismaking of *what* god? *How* did the public notice? And, later: "Jeanne Roland... was dubbed by the beautiful tones of she whom Hammer fans call *the universal voice*, whose lyrical vocals grace many a Hammer—and competitors'—film" (critique of **CURSE OF THE MUMMY'S TOMB** [1964], p. 99). Who is this "universal voice"? Maybe Hammer fans know, but the authors should be addressing a wider readership and presenting them with answers, not uncertainties. As with the Tut "curse," Cowie and Johnson assume readership knowledge that may be lacking. They do a nice job explaining the many pitfalls Hammer encountered during the production of **BLOOD FROM THE MUMMY'S TOMB** (1971), but their conclusion is rather startling: "**BLOOD FROM THE MUMMY'S TOMB**... became recognized as one of Hammer's few good horrors" (p. 107). Surely something is missing here (especially for a Hammer fan); the phrase inadvertently suggests that Hammer, in all their years of production, managed to make no more than a few good horror films, and none deserving of higher praise. "Few good horrors of the 1970s," perhaps?

From dearth to plethora: the book includes some overlong synopses that could be shortened. Obscure pieces like "Khaemwaset," Jane Webb's **THE MUMMY!**, **THE EYE OF OSIRIS**, etc., probably require the extensive treatment accorded them, but the space devoted to detailed recapitulations of **TIMEWALKER** (1982), **THE MUMMY** (1999), **THE MUMMY RETURNS** (2001), and Anne Rice's **THE MUMMY** novel, to name four, could have been better used for analysis or for discussion of films mentioned only in the Appendix—in other words, in giving us more wisdom.





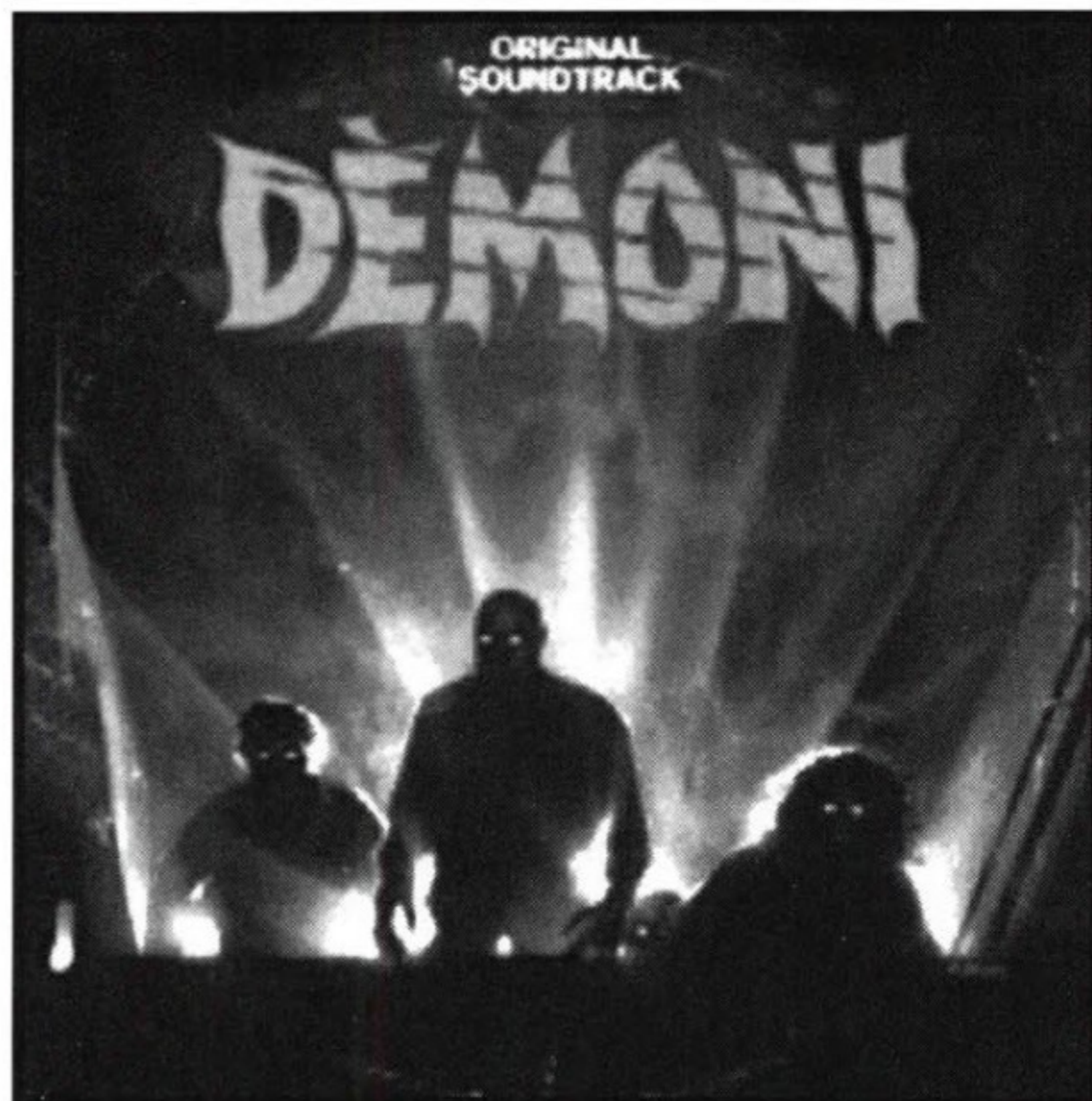
By Douglas E. Winter

*The Watchdog's Guide
to Finding Film Music
(Part Two)*

You've exhausted last issue's lessons, scouring retail bins, mail order catalogues, and websites in search of that ever-elusive soundtrack, only to learn that the disc of your dreams is out of print—or that it's never seen print. Hope is not lost. With persistence and creativity, you can strike silver and own that score on CD. Last issue, we tracked down **ASHES OF TIME**; in this installment, we continue the search for Norbert Jürgen Schneider's music for **STALINGRAD** and collect the Japan-only compilation disc for Lamberto Bava's **Demoni** [US: **DEMONS**], as well as the Golden Globe-winning underscore for **MOULIN ROUGE** [see VW 90:74-75].

Going Broke

Money really can buy almost everything. But when it comes to soundtrack CDs, my advice is to spend that cash elsewhere—not on costly eBay auctions or at excessive collector's prices. Establish and observe a limit: I won't pay more than \$40 for a single CD, regardless of its rarity or desirability. Most out-of-print discs don't command great sums, and in my experience, patience is rewarded—sooner or later, usually sooner, you'll find a copy at a reasonable price.



Going Digital

Particularly when your quarry has never been available on disc, it's time to think outside of the traditional soundtrack package. Expand your search to vinyl or audiocassette, and while you're waiting for a CD of that favorite score, burn your own. That approach brings **Demoni** into my CD collection, since the original Cinevox LP is a fairly simple find; with my Mac and Roxio Toast, I have a nice copy—cleaned of clicks and hiss—in less than an hour.

Also check out the increasing number of DVDs with isolated or separate musical scores. Soundtrack.net has a database of these DVDs, although currently limited to recent American films, and the occasional British one (like David Arnold's **TOMORROW NEVER DIES**). And don't forget the prevalence of MP3 (MPEG Audio Layer 3) files online. Designed for swift transfer over the internet, MP3 files—although controversial because of reduced sound quality and the obvious invitation to piracy—are increasingly available from legitimate sources, but you'll probably find only selected cues and not complete scores. For complete works, we turn to more questionable sources, including the newsgroup alt.binaries.sounds.mp3.soundtracks, which lead us from the bright light into the grey...

Going Grey

Grey market music is that of uncertain provenance—sometimes legal, but more often, in the strictest sense, not. CDs, like LPs and tapes, can be copied for private use or converted to MP3, whether to create a compilation of favorite tracks, a backup, or even a gift. Trading copied or converted CDs tests the boundaries of legality, since elements of barter are involved; in recent years, the recording industry has closed down the likes of Napster for abetting indiscriminate electronic “trading” of copyrighted music. Selling dupes of CDs is “bootlegging” in the truest sense—a violation of copyright for profit that triggers potential civil and criminal liability.

As a writer and musician, I don’t countenance bootlegging; but as a devoted listener, the grey market provides an opportunity to hear otherwise inaccessible scores. Some contend that bootlegs deter authorized releases, but the evidence is to the contrary: Philip Glass’ **CANDYMAN**, for example, was pushed into print by pervasive boots.

A prime source of bootlegs is the “promotional disc.” Composers often self-publish or subsidize CDs to publicize their film work or provide desirable music to fans. Other promos fit the mold of **MOULIN ROUGE**. Although its songs were represented in two commercial compilations, Craig Armstrong’s lovely underscore was issued only to those voting for the Golden Globe and Academy Awards. As the promo disc skyrocketed in price on the collector’s market, astute bootleggers packaged low-cost CD-Rs for those who simply wanted the music.

Going Shopping

The grey market involves no special code or secret handshake. In fact, a surprising number of these releases can be found at retail outlets. Forget the chains and look instead in smaller shops—particularly those that specialize in soundtrack, fringe, and “used” CDs. These specialists are music lovers who may turn a blind eye to a disc’s origins. For similar reasons, mail order and Internet dealers are excellent sources for off-shore and off-market discs; but you may need to work harder—at least half of my grey market CDs have been acquired face-to-face, across a dealer’s table at a public event.

Even small towns have swap meets, flea markets, or record shows; but unless you’re looking for vintage soundtracks on vinyl, you’re likely to be disappointed. I’ve yet to find a CD

soundtrack of interest at these venues, although they’re often great sources for rock imports and concert boots.

Media conventions—whether devoted to horror, science fiction, or television/movie memorabilia—can prove a gold mine. At a recent Chiller Theatre Convention, dealers offered authorized CDs ranging from GDI’s Hammer Film Series to Japanese anime and game scores—and then there was a table mingling soundtrack rarities with grey market wonders: Howard Shore’s **SINGLE WHITE FEMALE**, Simon Boswell’s **PHOTOGRAPHING FAIRIES**, and—*voilà!*—the **MOULIN ROUGE** underscore. And if you find the right dealer, he or she may well give you contact information for future purchases.

When buying off-shore and grey market discs, however... *buyer beware*. A regular at Fangoria conventions mislabels import soundtracks as out-of-print and charges several times what a knowing buyer would pay down the street at Tower Records. Sound quality is also a concern, since the sources of bootlegs can range from scratchy vinyl to second-generation tapes to immaculate masters. If you don’t know the seller, then take a Walkman and ask for a listen before you drop any dollars.

Going Public

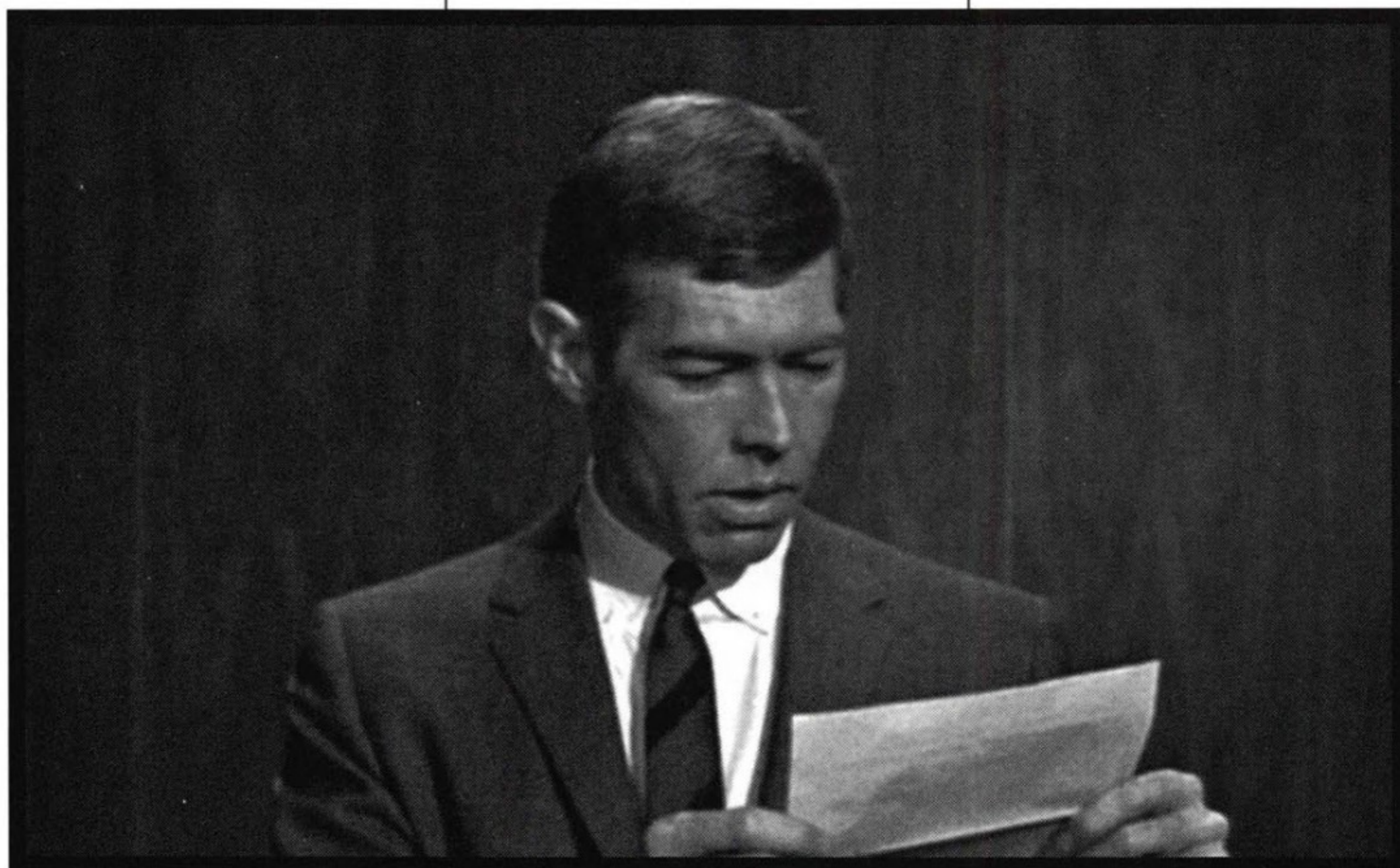
And that’s that... except I still haven’t found Norbert Jürgen Schneider’s out-of-print score for **STALINGRAD**. Yet that’s part of the pleasure of the hunt: There’s still something out there worth searching for, and one day I’ll be delighted to find it.

The final option is just as easily the first option for those who live in remote areas or who don’t access the Internet: it’s the old-fashioned way of finding things—by going public with your “want list.” Place an ad in a music magazine or newsletter (FILM SCORE MONTHLY offers free classifieds to its subscribers). Make posts to relevant Internet message boards and newsgroups. Network with fellow enthusiasts, whether next door or halfway around the world. And if you come up empty-handed, write a column for VIDEO WATCHDOG. Perhaps a reader will sell or trade you their copy of **STALINGRAD**...

Review materials should be sent c/o One Eyed Dog, PO Box 27305, Washington DC 20038. The Audio Watchdog is on-line at OnEyeDog@aol.com.



THE LETTERBOX



JONATHAN SOTHCOTT RESPONDS

I wonder if I might intrude upon the hospitality of The Letterbox to address certain matters raised in VW #88? I read the missives from Allan Bryce and Mark A. Miller with alternate amusement and concern, as the former is largely a rather flimsy fantasy, while the latter mixes resentment and paranoia into a fairly unpleasant cocktail of malice. I appreciate your attempt to balance the argument by printing the URL of an interview I gave to a fan website, but as it was published nearly 2½ years ago, it can hardly be deemed “recently conducted.”

Some years ago, I wrote semi-regularly for Allan Bryce’s magazine THE DARKSIDE. Bryce and I discussed the possibility of adding an Amicus history to his

small but growing catalogue of genre books. When Bryce okayed the idea, I set about writing it (rather foolishly, given that Bryce refused my request for any kind of signed contract), but it soon became clear that his view of the project was very different to mine. Bryce was interested in making a quick buck with a cut-rate version of THE HAMMER STORY (at one point he actually wanted to call it THE AMICUS STORY) and his primary concern was having lots of full color pictures. When I saw the hideous cover he commissioned I began to get cold feet—it was cheap, nasty and ruined by the garish magazine logo. We argued about this for some time, and eventually I pulled out of the project, in the hope that he would cancel it. What I had not counted on was the fact that Bryce already had

all the stills and posters, which I had either bought or borrowed from various collectors. Armed with this bundle of illustrations, which he refused point blank to return to me (and which I in turn refused to caption for him, hence the unidentified Gordon Hessler still), Bryce proceeded to produce the monstrosity that is AMICUS—THE STUDIO THAT DRIPPED BLOOD. The text he already had was a very early draft that was nowhere near complete (although my original disk of it, which is dated, contains a bibliography which was not published—presumably because I asked Bryce not to use my “acknowledgements”). Some of it was virtually in note form. In

*James Coburn studies an
informative document in
OUR MAN FLINT.*

his usual way, Bryce "edited" this, perhaps the most obvious examples of this editing being the addition of such critiques as, "Praise indeed from a man who usually felt his directors were as much use as a chocolate teapot!"

As to Bryce's assertion that one of the reasons we parted company was his "addition of some positive Subotsky material"—that's news to me, as I didn't see his additions until he sent me the actual book! The one real coup of the Amicus book was the input from Max J. Rosenberg, which I arranged through Richard Gordon. Max and I continue to enjoy a very good professional relationship, but at the time both Bryce and I were very aware of the fact that he had blocked a previous Amicus book, and we wanted to keep him on our side. I have since discussed the text with one of Milton Subotsky's sons, who suggested that its treatment of his father was generous. So, the bottom line regarding the Amicus book is that the buck stops with Allan Bryce. If it had been up to me, it would never have seen the light of day in the form that it did.

Mark A. Miller is a rather different proposition altogether: a man who seems to be obsessed by this idea that I "looted" his book. At the time I wrote my book *THE CULT FILMS OF CHRISTOPHER LEE*, it was decided that it should be a lightweight coffee table book and not a scholarly work of reference, and so chapter notes, extensive bibliographies and the like were out. In retrospect, I greatly regret this, as I now realize that they are absolutely crucial in order for a book to be accurate and balanced. Miller, however, seems to think that he was the victim of a deliberate vendetta, which is ridiculous. As to his dismissal of the acknowledgement I made to

him in the book, I find this hurtful. I have a file of correspondence between Mark and myself going back 4 or 5 years. I know that I sent him the **DRACULA A.D. 1972** chapter from my Lee book in an earlier (but still very recognizable) draft some years ago. I found his positive comments about it helpful and, until December 2000, when he wrote me a lengthier version of the letter you published, I was under the impression that we had no problems. Clearly, I was wrong.

It is obvious that certain prominent Hammer fans dislike me. That's fine. But fandom of all kinds is ruined by people propagating unpleasantness because they are so desperate to peg themselves as important or intellectual. This is why I stay well away from it. I enjoy Hammer Films, but I don't attend conventions or socialize in fan circles. The game most often played in fandom is Chinese Whispers and this can be a very destructive pursuit: it is easy to forget that we are all real people and that, as such, we all have both feelings and reputations.

I hope that both of these matters will now lie dormant, as all parties have had their say, and I have no intention of entering into a protracted slanging match under the auspices of your letters page. I would also be grateful if you would be good enough to print my letter in its entirety, in order that all of the points herein are addressed.

Jonathan Sothcott
London, England

I agreed to print Jonathan's letter since he was at the heart of an exchange of letters in VW #88 and did not have the opportunity to represent his side of the story at that time. I have not quite printed it "in its entirety," but nearly so; it was quite a long

letter, and I'm sure he'll agree that nothing cut was crucial to the points he sought to make. Let's consider the subject now closed.

THE WIZARDRY OF OSWALD

The OUTER LIMITS issue [VW #89] is a jewel in your crown, from the Joe Stefano epigram to the contributors' favorite monsters. Mine has always been the Cyclopean glob in the box in "Don't Open Till Doomsday." I consider the story of the bridegroom sucked into the little box inhabited by a one-eyed monster as a parable of Gerd Oswald's TV career, which kept him from consummating a more-than-promising career as a filmmaker, although THE OUTER LIMITS was certainly a nice consolation prize.

For a future issue: The films Oswald made in Europe are not available on tape, as far as I know. Halliwell lists **Am tag als der Regen** (1959), **Die Schachnovelle** (1960), **Tempesta su Ceylon** (1963) and **Biz sur Bitteren Neige** (1975). If **Die Schachnovelle** (aka **THE ROYAL GAME** aka **BRAINWASHED**) is any indication of their quality, they should be researched. I saw it as **BRAINWASHED** 25 years ago; it is an extraordinary film about a political prisoner who plays imaginary chess-games to preserve his sanity, the closest thing to filmed Nabokov I've ever seen.

Bill Krohn
Los Angeles, CA

THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG WITH YOUR DVD BOX SET

I am still reading and enjoying VW #89, especially David J. Schow's article about **THE OUTER LIMITS—THE FIRST SEASON** on DVD. By the way, when I

purchased my OL set at a local Borders Books, the package contained two copies of Disc 1, and no Disc 2. Fortunately, when I returned it for another one, the second set was OK. I don't know if this was an isolated case or if there are more floating around with the wrong disc inside.

Elsewhere in the magazine I read the DVD review of the two Abbott and Costello titles, **AFRICA SCREAMS** and **JACK AND THE BEANSTALK**. Nowhere in the review is there any mention of the two excellent laserdisc releases of these movies several years ago. Both were mastered from the best available material (**AFRICA SCREAMS** claimed to be from the camera negative) and the laserdisc sets contained outtakes, extra footage, and even an alternate ending to **JACK AND THE BEANSTALK**. I believe both were released by Image Entertainment (I didn't had a chance to look at the laserdisc jackets before writing this letter). Apparently none of these extras is on the DVD. It would be helpful to know, however, how these transfers compare to the laserdiscs. Does anyone have both for comparison?

Gary A. Stark
Cleveland, OH

D'AMATOS APLENTY

I just got the Italian Shock PAL DVD of **THE NEW YORK RIPPER** and the picture quality blows away the Anchor Bay release. More picture information has been added to the sides of the 2.35:1 transfer, and it has a much sharper picture. I compared a couple of scenes and it's a superior print (during the opening title card, the buildings and bridges in the background are more sharply focused, and during the scene when the cops converge on Howard Ross's

character's apartment, you can actually see a cop on the balcony, where as the AB print it's so dark that the screen looks black. (The IS print is also dark, but you can see the policeman!) In the scene where Zora Kerova's character is murdered, when the Ripper leaves the room, her body is awash in red light from the doorway; in the AB version, she is washed in red with no details, yet in the IS version, her face and body are clearly visible under the red lighting. And the IS print eliminates the insert of Paolo Malco walking away that fades to black at the end of the AB print—a shot that always bothered me. Upon closer inspection, it is the cut ending of a previous scene when Malco and Jack Hedley leave the hospital after interviewing Almanta Keller.

The one thing the AB print has going for it is a short scene that is missing from the IS version (and all others, I think): Barbara Cupisti finds all the police photos of the Ripper's murder victims in Malco's office and the two of them have a short conversation. The running time is 87m in PAL, whereas the AB runs about 93. Other than that, the IS version is complete. The AB version also has slightly better sound, but the IS definitely has the better picture quality (and it reveals more of the 2.35:1 image). This is the second time I've seen Italian Shock put out a better print than Anchor Bay; the first was also a Fulci film, **ZOMBIE**, which was released on Region 2 under its original Italian title of **Zombi 2**!

Stonevision Entertainment's PAL DVD of Joe D'Amato's **11 DAYS, 11 NIGHTS** (or **ELEVEN DAYS ELEVEN NIGHTS**, as the title appears on the print itself) is the cut English language version, but it differs from the American version shown on cable TV

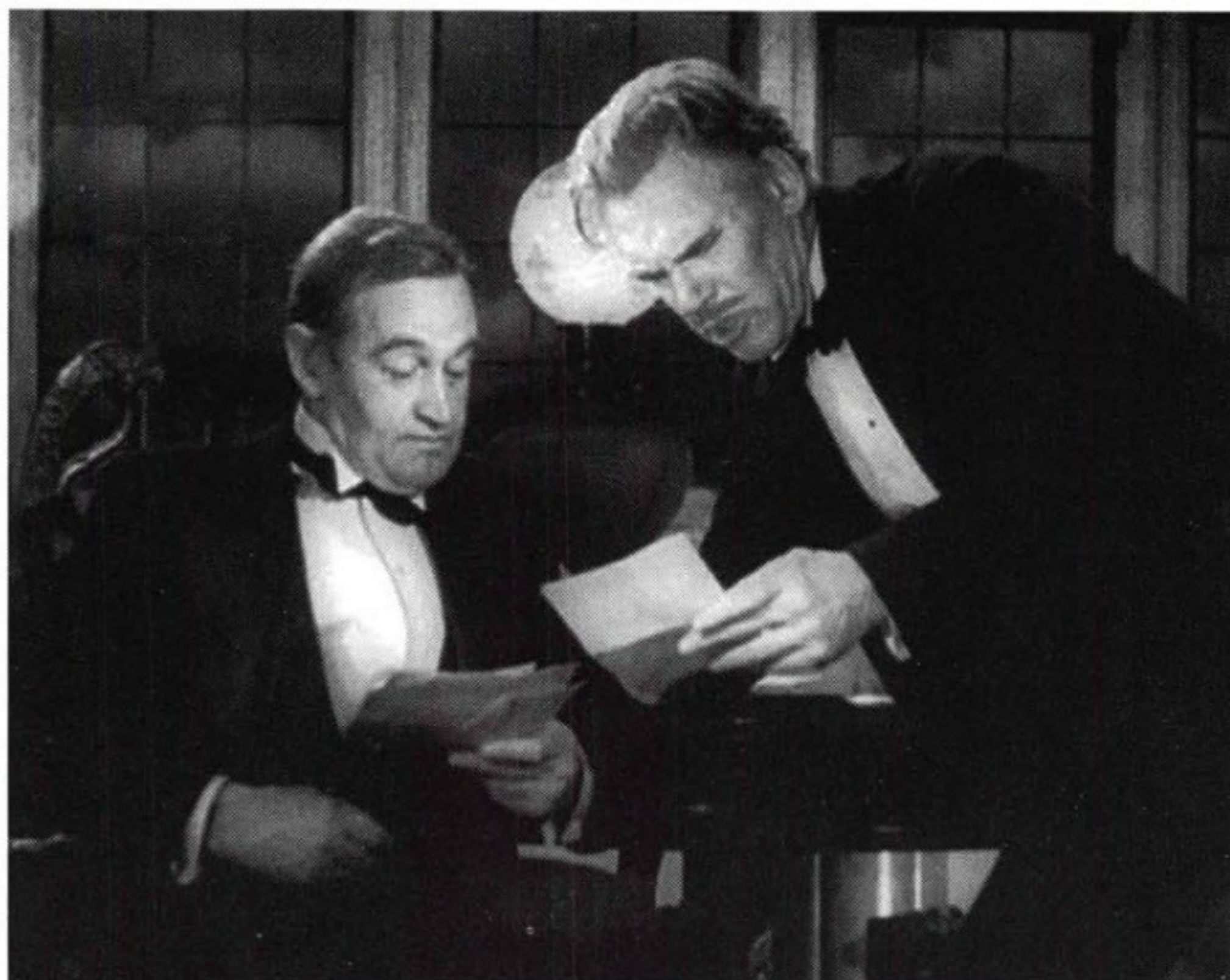
years ago. It's missing all of Jessica Moore's full frontal nudity (no pubic shots), yet it contains the scene of an aborted threesome with a black man at the end (and some of the after-fight bathroom scene) that was cut from the American version (which looped footage and music to create flashbacks for the characters to pad out the running time). The source print is beautiful, and in a funny bit of inaccuracy, the cover states "Widescreen" (although this has been blacked-out with a magic marker on my copy—I don't know if the film company, or the person I bought it from, was responsible) and the back declares the (fullscreen) film to be "Widescreen 1:33"!

Astro Film's German (or Dutch?) PAL DVD of D'Amato's **KILLING BIRDS** is slightly trimmed, despite claiming to be uncut. The gore scenes look like the were inserted from an inferior looking print as the quality changes during them. I only compared the opening scene to a Japanese (bootleg) video; in that version, after her husband's throat is slit, his wife wakes up because she touches the blood from his neck, screams, tries calling for help on the phone, and then runs out of the house. On the Astro disc, the wife just wakes up, screams, and runs out of the house. Despite the trims, the quality blows away the Japanese print, in which many day scenes appear to be set at night.

A few Watchdog bits regarding Joe D'Amato's **11 DAYS 11 NIGHTS 2** and **HYENA**. As with Stonevision Entertainment's PAL DVDs **11 DAYS 11 NIGHTS** and **LABYRINTH OF LOVE**, **11 DAYS 11 NIGHTS 2** (the actual onscreen video-generated title reads "ELEVEN DAYS ELEVEN NIGHTS THE SEQUEL") has been trimmed of most of the full

frontal nudity shots in the film. The cuts are the same as those on the version shown on cable years ago under its official title **TOP MODEL**. However, I think there is a bit more pubic nudity in Stonevision's print. It's a shame about the cuts as the prints for all three films are the best I've seen, and the "Master of Erotic Cinema/The Joe D'Amato Experience" tagline on all three DVD covers is misleading, as some of the erotica has been cut. Stonevision also has DVD releases of **11 DAYS 11 NIGHTS 3** (actually D'Amato's 1989 *Pomeriggio caldo* aka **AFTERNOON**, which was retitled **11 DAYS 11 NIGHTS 3** for its British video release) and **11 DAYS 11 NIGHTS 4: WEB OF DESIRE** (which is D'Amato's "official" sequel **11 DAYS 11 NIGHTS 2** [1990]). The reason I know so much about the "11 DAYS" films is that I wrote an article on actress Jessica Moore for Craig Ledbetter's ETC that was never published.

THE HYENA [*La iena*, 1997] is a late period D'Amato sex-thriller on the Korean Bitwin label, all region NTSC. Having never seen a foreign print, I can't be sure if it's cut, but I believe it is missing much of the erotic footage during the sex scenes, as they play in slow motion—much like cut softcore fare does when an R-rated version is shown on Cinemax or Showtime. Another possible cut is when Cinzia Roccaforte's character is about to be molested by David D'Ingeo, the film cuts to an extraneous scene with her husband and his lover walking to a hotel room; when it cuts back to Roccaforte, D'Ingeo is peeling duct tape off her mouth, her wrists are tied, and her nude body is covered by the robe she was wearing in the previous scene. Not a great film by any standards, but entertaining with



Barry Fitzgerald and Walter Huston squint over some correspondence in AND THEN THERE WERE NONE, reissued on DVD by Image Entertainment.

a more nihilistic ending than is normal with this genre. Good picture quality, too.

Dan Pydynkowski
Danvers, MA


DEAD BUT IT AIN'T THE FIRST TIME

In the interests of veracity, I'd like to make a small point regarding your "Watchdog News" story on David Cronenberg's **THE DEAD ZONE** [VW 88:4]. The article mentions twice that the "scissors suicide" shot was missing from "all British videos" and "this marks the first time that the complete version" has been released in the UK; this is incorrect. While the shot was deleted from the original Thorn EMI video release (13s, abridged by the distributor to secure a "15" cert), a subsequent release a few years ago by 4-Front/Polygram video (catalog number #085 882 3) was complete and rated "18."

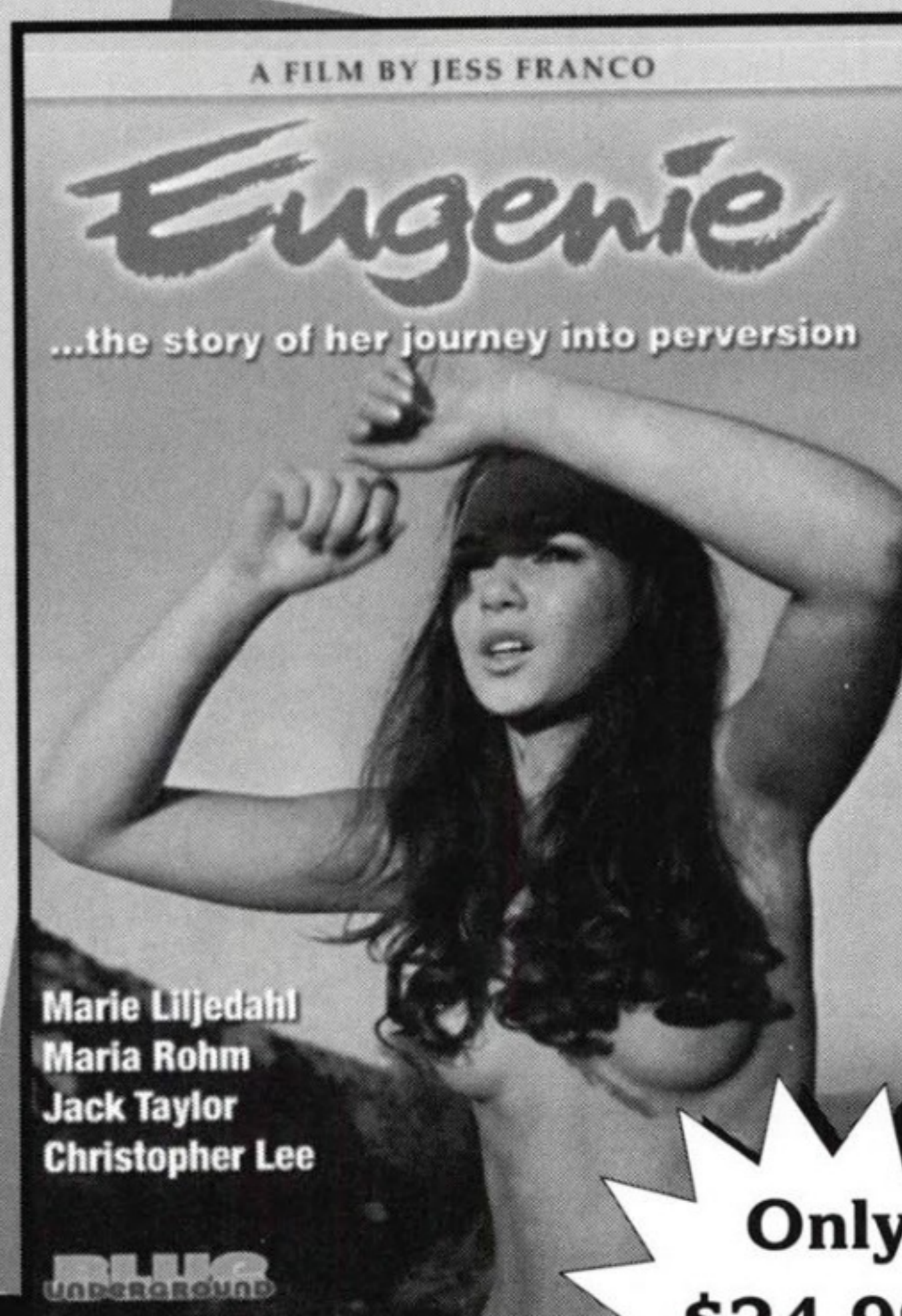
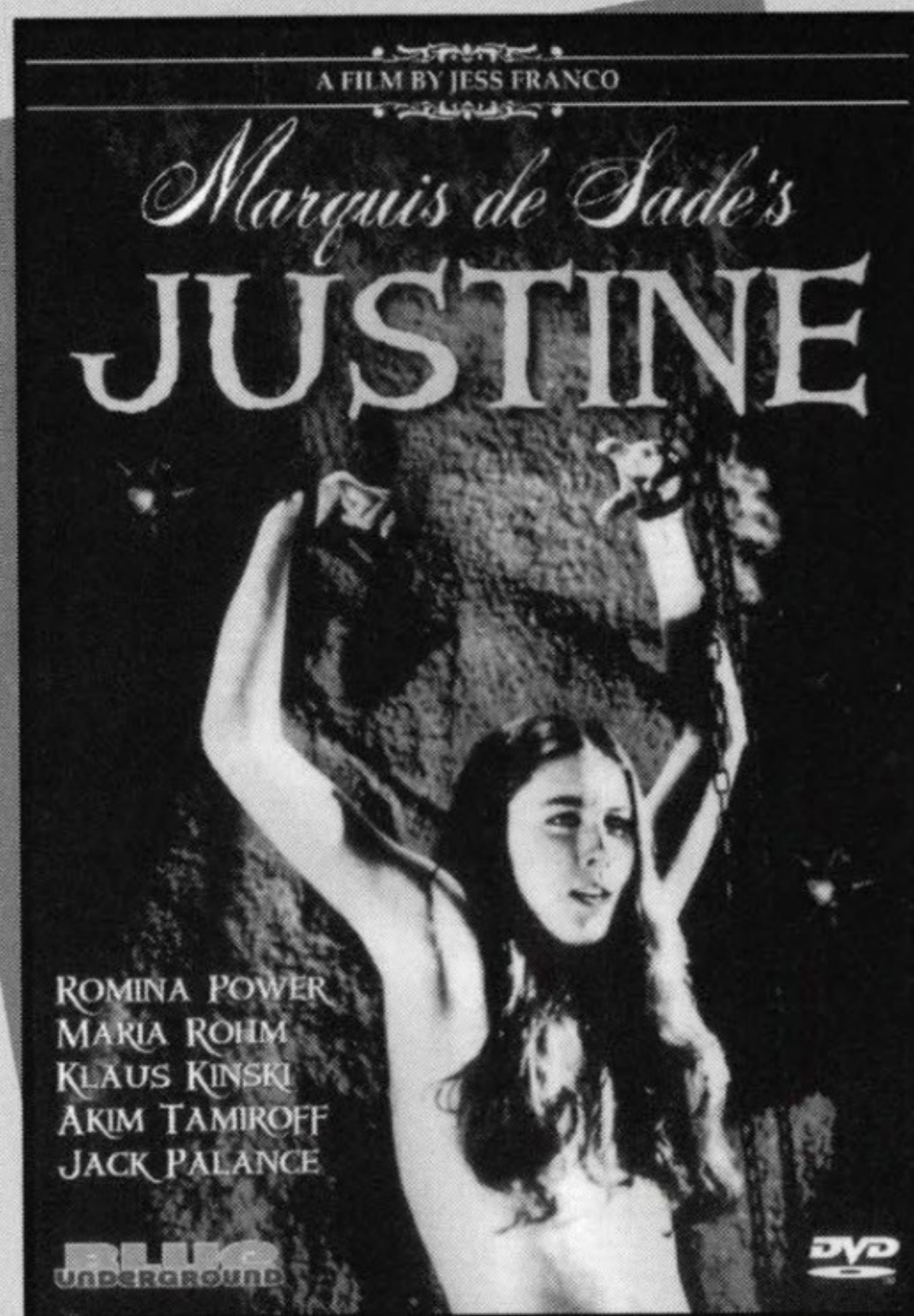
Victor Boston
Dublin, Ireland

THAT DAMNED SONG AGAIN

Not to be extremely nitpicky, but in VW #89 you printed that The Damned's song from the Cadillac scene of **RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD** was removed and replaced by an "awkwardly repeat" of a song from the cemetery scene. This is incorrect. While The Damned's song has indeed been removed, it has been replaced by a song called "Young, Fast, Iranian" by the Boston punk rock band the F.U.'s, from their 1985 LP **DO WE REALLY WANT TO HURT YOU?** This song has not appeared in any other version of the movie I have seen, nor is it on the soundtrack. However, the F.U.'s (and their later, more heavy metal-inclined incarnation, The Strawdogs) were signed to Enigma records at the time, which is the record label which released the **ROTLD** soundtrack.

Ken Reid
Melrose, MA 

Never Before on Home Video! Two of Franco's Finest!



Only

\$24.99 USA

\$28

Outside USA

"This restored version of **JUSTINE** is a revelation, and **EUGENIE** is beyond classification... Artistic, literary, erotic, philosophic, building to a climax of mind-bending horror... it exceeded my own high expectations!"
—Tim Lucas

Blue Underground proudly presents...

for the first time on video in America, **MARQUIS DE SADE'S JUSTINE**

and **EUGENIE... THE STORY OF HER JOURNEY INTO PERVERSION—complete and uncut!**

Previously available only in a severely truncated version titled **DEADLY SANCTUARY**,

MARQUIS DE SADE'S JUSTINE restores 30 minutes of scandalous footage to the most lavish production of Jess Franco's career! Not to be confused with **EUGENIE DE SADE, EUGENIE... THE STORY OF HER JOURNEY INTO PERVERSION**

is the most hotly anticipated Franco DVD ever! Out of circulation since its 1970 theatrical release,

it's a tantalizing, psychedelic adaptation of De Sade's **PHILOSOPHY IN THE BOUDOIR**,

starring **INGA's** Marie Liljedahl, Maria Rohm, Jack Taylor and Christopher Lee!

Both unrated DVDs feature stunning anamorphic widescreen transfers,

theatrical trailers, exciting "Making Of" documentaries, and

extensive liner notes by VIDEO WATCHDOG's Tim Lucas!

Tim will sign copies on request!

**Video★
Watchdog®**

PO Box 5283
Cincinnati, OH 45205-0283

1-800-275-8395

or 513-471-8989; Fax: 707-356-5432

Email: videowd@aol.com

Price includes First Class or Air Mail postage!

Checks, Money Orders, Cash, Visa/MC accepted in US funds only.

Is Your Name in the Book?



REMEMBER!

When you pre-order, **YOUR NAME**
will be added to the special
List of Patrons

appearing inside the First Edition!

Tim Lucas will also sign all
pre-ordered copies, and you will
receive a signed bookmark upon
receipt of your order.

Order no later than
March 1, 2003
FINAL DEADLINE!!

- **28 Years** in the Making!

- **The Complete Story** of
Mario Bava's life and careers
as a director, cameraman and
special effects artist

- **Interviews** with more than 70
actors, co-workers, friends and family
members—and running commentary
by **Bava Himself!**

- **The Definitive Study**
of each of his films:
complete production histories,
cast biographies, and
critical analysis

- **Never-before Published Photos**
including private family shots
and the **only** color pictures taken
on the set of **BLACK SUNDAY**

- **Original Bava Storyboards**
and artwork (some in full color!)

- **Bava's Secret Filmography:**
His uncredited works as
director, cameraman and
special effects artist

- **Complete Filmography,**
Videography and Discography

- **Preface** by Bava's mentor, **Riccardo Freda!**

MARIO BAVA

ALL THE COLORS OF THE DARK

TIM LUCAS

Coming 2003

Hardcover; List Price \$120; Pre-Publication Price: \$97 USA
\$115 Outside USA (includes postage)

Video Watchdog, PO Box 5283, Cincinnati, OH 45205-0283

1-800-275-8395 • 513-471-8989 • Fax: 707-356-5432 • www.videowatchdog.com

James Coburn • Susan George • Highlander • In Like Flint
Johnny Firecloud • Paul Naschy • Our Man Flint • Sam Peckinpah
The Ring Cycle • Seduction Cinema Vampires • Warning from Space

